

"The Village"

The Woods

by

M. Night Shyamalan

INT. HILLTOP - NOON

One might describe the scene as beautiful, if one could get by the child's coffin.

A wooden sign in the dirt reads.

"Here lies Daniel Nicholson.
Beloved by all.
Died October 3, 1897"

A wilting man in his late forties sits on the grass next to the, much too small box.

MAN(smiling)
Who will plague me with
questions now?... Who will
pinch me to wake me up? Who
will laugh at me when I fall?
(voice cracks)
Who's breath will I listen to so
that I may sleep? Who's hand
will I hold, so that I may walk?

The wilting man's face trembles.

Behind him, a respectful thirty feet away, stand a group of about sixty people, equally still.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUPPER TABLE - AFTERNOON

An enormous handmade wooden table sits in the center of a small village of log cabins. All sixty members of the village are seated for the meal.

The women wear bonnets. The men have their farmer's shirts rolled up at the sleeves.

A man in his late forties stands. He has the eyes of a child; innocent and pure. This is EDWARD WALKER.

WALKER

We came here to start anew.

Beat. Eyes look up one by one. Edward Walker stands silently, appearing suddenly overwhelmed. A hand reaches up and squeezes his arm. Edward Walker looks down to the wilting man we saw earlier. They look at each other quietly.

Walker turns back to the table.

WALKER

We came here to start anew.
We are grateful for the time we
have been given.

Walker sits. Movement begins across the table as hands begin to pass bread and corn and meat.

AND THEN WE HEAR IT. THE SOUND CARRIES THROUGH THE AIR AND BLEEDS INTO THE VILLAGE. IT COMES FROM THE WOODS.

SCREAMS. IT IS NOT HUMAN.

All movement at the table stops, except for a TALL BOY at the end of the table. He is barely in his twenties. He is mentally handicapped. He starts clapping wildly.

Everyone else sits uncomfortably still. No expressions on their faces. They wait.

THEN THE SCREAMS SLOWLY START TO MOVE AWAY.

The boy's clapping slows and then stops as well. The happiness trickles from his face.

The rest of the table waits till the last of the nonhuman screams have moved away. And then quietly hands start reaching across the table again.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATER PUMP – LATE AFTERNOON

A group of women and girls are washing and drying the wooden bowls and plates at a hand water pump that stands in the ground.

A strong older woman pumps the handle. Bursts of water spurt out from the pump's mouth. Two girls are holding bowls under the water. One girl gets splashed by the other. They both start laughing. The older woman makes a disapproving noise with her mouth. The girls looks over, nod and return to washing the bowls; little grins on their little faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORCH – LATE AFTERNOON

Two young women sweep the porch of a cabin. One of the young women starts mimicking the other's movements. They begin to sweep in synch. They both begin to smile as they sweep. They begin to move around the porch like dancers.

They're giggling stops as one spots something. They both stop dancing. They look down at the base of the post that holds the porch roof up. There are two RED WILDFLOWERS peeking out from the fist full of weeds.

They bend down quickly and yank the red wildflowers out. They move off the porch and kneel down in the dirt next to the porch.

They use their hands to dig a small hole in the dirt. They put the crushed red wildflowers into the hole and methodically bury it.

The two young women stand, look around, and wipe themselves off before returning to the porch and picking up the brooms again.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD BELL - LATE AFTERNOON

A MEDIUM SIZED BRASS BELL hangs from a wooden t-post. A hand reaches out and takes hold of the rope that dangles from its side. The hand pulls once strong and hard.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORAGE CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Men stow away farm equipment. Hoes and sickles are stacked neatly in piles.

A LONG BELL TOLLS.

The men stop working. They put down their tools where they stand. One man leans into the storage cabin to tell those inside.

MAN
Drill bell.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATER PUMP - LATE AFTERNOON

The older women usher the girls into an orderly line as they leave the area of the water pump. Dirty dishes are left on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLUSTER OF CABINS - LATE AFTERNOON

We see the courtyard. There are clusters of cabins on every side. We watch as one by one everyone in the courtyard and everyone coming in from the fields, disappears into different cabins like ants retreating into ant holes.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

We are in someone's home. A group of about eight women and children walk in through the front door. They move to the back of the small cabin where a woman reaches down and pulls on a handle in the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. DIFFERENT CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

We are in another two-room cabin. A group of men wait their turn as each man climbs into the trap door in the floor.

When the last is in. The final man reaches up and brings down the trap door, closing them all in.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

A collection of two men, four women and three children are huddled together in a four by eight space in the ground. The adults have to sit down to fit in this space.

A THIN STRIP OF LIGHT FALLS ON THE FACES from the seam in the trap door. All we hear is the nine of them breathing. Their eyes all stare at the **CRACK OF LIGHT**.

A child coughs. A woman reaches over a couple bodies and pats the coughing child on his back. The child settles. They all return to staring at the light. Beat.

THE BRASS BELL SOUNDS AGAIN.

The two men reach up and open the trap door. **LIGHT POURS IN.**

One by one, they all climb out of the four by eight space in the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

The men, women and three children walk out into the afternoon light. One woman immediately grabs a broom and continues cleaning the porch.

The community returns to doing their chores.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

We are in the darkness, looking into the LIGHT OF A CABIN WINDOW. We see a child's bedroom - A small bed - A small wooden desk. On the child's desk there is nothing.

The wilting man lays curled up on the little bed. He stares out with red eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

In another cabin we see a woman pouring water from a jug into a large white bowl by the side of the bed. We see her speak to her husband who sits reading in bed. She leans over and begins washing her face with the water in the bowl.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Three children kneel and pray by their bedside. Their parents begin blowing out the oil lamps in their room.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

A young man blows his nose into a handkerchief. He wipes his face and resumes standing. His eyes gaze down quietly. The ORANGE LIGHT FROM THE TORCH LIT NEXT TO HIM, FLICKERS ON HIS FACE.

He is standing on a platform, thirty feet in the air. It is a tower on the edge of this community. He is keeping guard.

Arms folded, he stares at the darkened woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE - MORNING

A group of children carrying cloth bags with books in them, crowd around something in the dirt.

Edward Walker moves through the tiny gathering.

WALKER

What manner of spectacle has
caught your attention so
splendidly? I ought to carry it
in my pocket to help me teach.

Edward Walker parts the final layer of titillated children. He stares down at the thing on the ground. Beat. His expression becomes grave.

WALKER

Who came upon this?

It takes a moment before a little boy steps forward. His eyes never look up.

WALKER

Philip, did you move this?

PHILIP shakes his head, "No." Everyone watches Walker who turns and looks down again quietly.

IT IS HARD FOR US TO SEE THROUH ALL THE TINY LEGS AND FEET OF THE CHILDREN. THERE IS SOMETHING DARK AND MOIST LYING IN THE DIRT.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The classroom is overcome by whispering. Walker uses chalk to write the date, "October 5, 1897" on a gray slate board framed in wood.

He turns to the children who range in age from seven to twelve.

WALKER

Okay, let's have it. What delicious conclusions have you come to?

THIN BOY

An animal God created was slain.

WALKER

Donald, please, try to speak plainly. It disturbs your mother, when you speak so darkly. Everything need not be said with such drama.

Another hand shoots up.

WALKER

Marybeth.

MARYBETH

I inspected it carefully. Its head was twisted back and much of its fur was removed.

WALKER

I see.

DONALD

It was murdered.

Now the children become quiet.

WALKER

So who is the culprit? Who has
done this heinous act?

Beat.

MARY

Those we don't speak of, killed
it.

WALKER

And there it is.

(beat)

Why would such a notion enter
your heads?

TWELVE-YEAR OLD BOY

Those we don't speak of, eat
smaller animals.

BROWN EYED GIRL

Those we don't speak of have
claws.

WALKER

Children... Those we don't
speak of have not breached our
border for many years. We do
not go into their woods and
they do not come into our
valley. We do not threaten
them. Why would they do this?

DONALD

It is a warning of the doom to
come.

WALKER
(stern)

Donald.

Walker gazes out at the classroom of concerned children.

WALKER

Is it possible, in your haste, you have missed the simplest explanation? That this small animal was slain by a slightly larger animal like a fox, and that this said fox carried it into our village to avoid other scavengers from coming and eating his prize. And when our village awoke and started its morning business, the fox was scared off and left its prize for us to find.

(beat)

I can't say if that's what really happened, but it's certainly more reasonable to think that, than something... unprecedented.

MARY

I did see two foxes on the hill yesterday.

Walker watches the image of the foxes scamper through the minds of the children.

WALKER

Does anyone have further questions pertaining to our immediate doom?

Walker winks at Donald. No one raises their hand.

WALKER

Then if it is agreeable, let us
begin our studies.

One by one, the children reach into their cloth bags and retrieve their notebooks.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

We are in one of the largest cabins. Wooden chairs are scattered throughout. This is some sort of gathering place.

Twelve of the chairs have been brought together in a circle. Twelve of the oldest members of the village are seated in the chairs.

The Wilting man and Edward Walker are among them.

FIDGETY WOMAN

We ought not to overlook the Flight of the Birds. We didn't have it last year and I for one missed it desperately. I know Tabitha missed the children dressed in feathers and such.

A small, gentle woman with her hair tied back, looks up. TABITHA sits to Edward Walker's side.

TABITHA

I am fond of it.

The two women slowly turn to Edward.

EDWARD

I do not have a say in this matter. August Nicholson is Chair of today's meeting.

All eyes turn to the wilting man, AUGUST NICHOLSON. He appears exhausted. August nods as he shuffles the papers in his hand.

AUGUST

The Flight of the Birds will be returned to this year's Fall Festival.

The group nods quietly.

FIDGETY WOMAN

Let us speak of food then.

THERE IS A KNOCK at the far end of the room. All attention moves in that direction.

Another man in his mid forties steps in. He carries a tiny smile, his eyebrows are raised.

MAN

There is a young man who has requested a word with the elders.

The group looks to one another. This is unusual.

AUGUST

Do have him come forward.

The man with the raised eyebrows steps out. Beat. The door stays still for a moment, and then it opens.

A sinewy young man in his twenties steps in. His deep-set brow and dark green eyes never look up as he walks forward to the group.

There are many glances to a pretty elder in her forties. Edward looks to her as well. She stares back with the identical dark green eyes as the boy. She shakes her head slightly; She doesn't know why he's here.

The young man slows to a stop a few feet from them. His hand brings a paper up. He begins to read carefully.

GREEN EYES

My mother is unaware of the reason for my visit today. She did not give her consent or consult me in any form.

The woman with green eyes moves forward in her seat without knowing it.

GREEN EYES

I have spent all but my first years in this village. It is all that I know. It is a blessed place, this village. Our days are filled with love and compassion and joy.

His green eyes flick up, just for a moment... He returns to the paper.

GREEN EYES

But there is also some suffering and fear. The passing of little Daniel Nicholson from illness-

August Nicholson goes still.

GREEN EYES

-and other events have weighted on my thoughts. We have been taught of the greed and corruption that exists in the towns. And the countless wasted lives centered on the exchange of money there. But we have also been taught about their fascination with science and machines and medicine.

GREEN EYES

Could they have rescued Daniel
from his terrible illness?

(beat)

I ask permission to cross into
the forbidden woods and travel
to the nearest town. I will
gather new medicines and
information of what has
happened in the world, and I
will return.

Beat.

GREEN EYES

With regards to Those we don't
speak of, I am but a single
person, I am not a threat to
them, I am certain they will let
me pass.

(Beat)

Creatures can sense emotion
and fear. They will see I am
pure of intention and not afraid.
The end.

The young man with green eyes lowers his hands with the paper and stares at the group.

No one moves at first. Edward Walker begins to smile.

WALKER

(soft)

Lucius Hunt, that is the most
I've heard you speak in many
years combined.

The young man with green eyes stands quietly before the group.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The pretty woman with green eyes sits on the edge of her bed in her night robe. She hears her son descend the ladder from the loft space he lives in.

ALICE HUNT watches him through her bedroom doorway.

ALICE

What goes on in that head of
yours?

LUCIUS turns to face her.

ALICE

Say something Lucius.

Beat. Lucius stares.

LUCIUS

(soft)

Finton Coin is in the Tower. I
promised to sit with him.

Alice lies back in her bed. She pulls the covers over herself. She gazes at her son from the pillow.

ALICE

Why do you not tell me what
you feel? I do not know if you
think about love. I do not know
what your dreams are. When
you stood today, you spoke in
such a gentlemanly manner. I
scarcely recognized you.

Her eyes close.

ALICE

How can a mother fail to
recognize her son? Tell me.
Tell me that...

Lucius watches his mother become quiet. Her breathing becomes steady and soft.

Lucius walks into her room and takes the quilt from the rocking chair and gently places it over his mother's sleeping shoulders. He whispers in her ear.

LUCIUS

I do think about love.

Lucius walks out of his mother's room and exits the cabin quietly.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

FINTON COIN is a skinny boy with big curly hair. He is on the platform tonight, thirty feet in the air.

The trap door opens as Lucius climbs up. Finton immediately relaxes.

FINTON

Did anyone see your approach?

Lucius shakes his head, "No."

FINTON

I saw Christop Crane sniffing around. He suspects something. He has announced, more than once, in my presence that only one man should hold post in the tower each night. Why would he say such a thing if he didn't suspect? What a wretch he is? Is it so bad to be a trifle timid?

FINTON

Are you sure you were not
detected?

Lucius shakes his head again, "No" as he takes his seat in the corner. Beat.

FINTON

And I shared a portion of my
chicken with him not two days
ago. A fine, tender piece.

The two young men fall into silence; one sitting, one standing. And then out
of the silence-

LUCIUS

Do you ever think of the towns
Finton?

Finton turns to the sound of Lucius' voice.

FINTON

The towns? What for? They're
wicked places where wicked
people live, that's all.

Finton doesn't notice the expression on Lucius' face as he sits in the
shadows. Finton shrugs his shoulders and returns to looking out. Beat.

FINTON

(soft)

I do hope no one saw you.

CUT TO:

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - DAY

Along the hilltop runs a group of twenty apple trees; their branches bursting
with deep red pickings.

On the ground near the trees are baskets filled with apples. A few are toppled over.

Standing in a tight group a few feet from the abandoned baskets are a group of women. The same quiet fearful expressions on their faces.

They stare at something at the base of a tree. We can't see what it is, but we can HEAR THE FLIES BUZZING around its dead carcass.

ALICE(o.s)

We understand the depth of
your worries, but you needn't
be alarmed.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

Every member of the village is jammed into this little building. The elders are standing towards the front of the room.

Alice Hunt's green eyes look compassionately over the gathering.

ALICE

What we seem to have amongst us, is a scavenger of some type. Most likely a coyote or wolf. It's manner of killing and removing the fur, but leaving the flesh torn may be a sign that the animal may suffer from madness.

An uncomfortable murmur flutters in the meeting room.

ALICE

For the next fortnight we
should be vigilant for sightings
of this coyote. Keep careful
watch over the little ones as
they play on the hills.

(lowers voice)

As for the other notion... we do
not believe our boundary has
been breached. Those We
Don't Speak Of are much larger
creatures than coyotes. We
would know if they had been
here.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

We pick up Edward Walker as he leaves the meeting hall with the rest of the congregation. A young woman in her early twenties catches up to him. She has a round attractive face. She is the lively sort. She practically bounces to his side.

GIRL

It's frightful, this business with
the coyote, is it not Pappa?

WALKER

Do not feel worried Kitty?

KITTY

You are not troubled?

WALKER

I am certain it will all end soon.

KITTY

Can we speak on other matters
then?

WALKER
It would be a relief.

KITTY WALKER takes his arm and whispers in his ear as they walk.

KITTY
I am in love.

He looks at his daughter as they turn the corner onto a path where they are alone. Kitty beams at his side.

WALKER
I have great reverence for the word 'love' Kitty. It should not be thrown about lightly. It is the greatest force on this earth.

KITTY
These feelings are so strong, it can be nothing else Pappa.

WALKER
I see.

KITTY
You do not believe me.

WALKER
I have no judgment yet.

KITTY
It must have been bubbling inside me for a long time, for it came bursting forth not three days ago. I have thought of nothing since.

Edward nods his head.

WALKER
'Bunting forth' is it?

KITTY
I realized since I'm the eldest of your children and since you were stricken with five girls and no boys, I decided to act as if I were the son and ask your permission.

WALKER
I must correct you on the word 'stricken'. I would not trade any one of my five daughters for a hundred of the finest boys. So now, what is it you are asking permission for?

KITTY
I would like permission to marry, Pappa.

WALKER
There is a proper manner in which these things are to happen. Such as the boy would normally be standing next to you at a moment such as this. Where is the boy in all of this Kitty?

KITTY
I haven't spoken to him as of yet.

Now Edward stops walking.

WALKER

The young man is unaware of
your intentions?

KITTY

He has a quiet way. I was going
to talk with him, but I wanted
your blessings papa. I wont talk
with him without your
blessings.

Edward starts walking again.

WALKER

Kitty-

KITTY

It's Lucius Hunt.

WALKER

-Lucius?

Kitty sees the expression on her father's face.

KITTY

You think badly of him?

WALKER

No, no... I've just been
thinking on him recently.

Kitty's face returns to beaming.

KITTY

He's not like the other boys. He
doesn't joke and bounce about.

WALKER

He certainly doesn't.

KITTY
Do I have your blessings then?

He looks down at his eldest daughter. He nods, "yes."

She hugs him tight as they come to a stop in the far end of the courtyard at the base of the medium sized town bell.

WALKER
Do me one favor first Kitty. Do not tell anyone else of your 'burstings' until you have spoken with the young man.

Kitty nods earnestly. Beat. Edward Walker gets lost in his thoughts again.

KITTY
(whispers)
Papa, something does trouble you?

Edward looks down and sees the concern in his daughter's eyes.

Beat. He then reaches up and pulls long and hard on the rope that tolls the brass bell.

We see in the background everyone stops what they're doing and begins walking in lines towards the cabins.

We watch as people walk in from the stream and from the orchards. They disappear quietly into the cabins.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

Lucius stands at the edge of a field of crops. He methodically removes the clumps of dirt from the prongs of the tools he's used on the soil that day.



KITTY

Good afternoon Lucius.

Lucius' hands stop their work. He turns and looks over his shoulder at the young woman that stands before him. She rises on her tip-toes and returns to earth again. Lucius never lets go of his tools. He nods hello to her.

KITTY

I wanted to tell you something.

Lucius stares.

KITTY

My goodness, my heart is
pounding so fast, I think I may
faint right on this spot... You'd
probably catch me course,
before I fell.



Lucius continues to stare.

KITTY

Seeing as you're of age... and
seeing as I'm of age... and
seeing as we get along so well
like this... A thought entered
my head that may have entered
your head as well.

Lucius blinks his green eyes. Kitty takes this as a positive gesture and smiles sweetly.



KITTY

(soft)

I love you Lucius. I love you
like the day is long. I love you
more than the sun and moon
together. And if you feel the
same way, we should not hide
it any longer. It's a gift, love is.

KITTY

We should be thankful. We
should bellow it with all the
breath in our lungs, "Thank
you! Thank you! Thank you!"

Kitty finishes her flurry by rising up on the tips of her toes and returning to earth again.

Lucius stares.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN - NIGHT

Kitty is wailing.

Edward carries his youngest daughter in his arms as his petite wife holds their next two youngest on their laps. They watch with concern as Kitty cries loudly from her bedroom

Kitty is being consoled by her closest sister. Kitty has her head in her sister's lap.

IVY WALKER strokes the hair of her older sister gently. Ivy is thin, almost too thin. Her long blond hair falls over her sharp striking face.

She wipes the tears from her sister's cheeks. Beat. Ivy begins to sing softly.

IVY

(sings)

Why are you sorrowful, why do
you weep? Why do you ask me
to rock you to sleep? Could you
but see thro' this world's vale
of tears...

Edward and Tabitha Walker hold their three youngest girls and listen quietly from the other room.

IVY

(sings)

Light would your sorrows be,
harmless your fears, all that
seems darkness to you would
be light, all would be sunshine
where now is but night...

Ivy wipes the last tears from her sister's face. Ivy's voice fills the cabin and wraps them all like a blanket.

CUT TO:

INT. AUGUST NICHOLSON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Lucius knocks on the half open door with his elbow. He waits a moment and pushes the door open. Lucius carries a large pile of firewood in his arms as he steps into the cabin.

He sees the wilting man, August Nicholson, sleeping in a chair.

Lucius moves to the hearth. Some of the kindling falls off the pile onto the floor. August stirs awake. He sees Lucius kneeling with the wood.

AUGUST

You are very kind.

Lucius nods.

AUGUST

You must pardon my manners.
I haven't slept in many nights.

Lucius nods again and starts making a pile next to the hearth. Beat.

AUGUST(o.s.)

-like a dog can smell you.

Lucius turns. August has his eyes closed. Beat.

LUCIUS

Did you say something Mr.
Nicholson?

August doesn't reply. He is fast asleep in the chair.

Lucius returns to the pile. He transfers the last of the firewood from his arms.

AUGUST(o.s.)

-you may run from sorrow. As
we have. Sorrow will find you.

Lucius turns to see August, eyes open this time, staring into the corner of the cabin.

AUGUST

It can smell you.

Lucius follows the elder's gaze to the corner of the room where a WOODEN BLACK BOX, one foot by one foot, sits on a table all by itself.

Lucius turns back to August.

AUGUST

(reverent)

There were pastries with
cream in them.

Lucius watches as August Nicholson's eyes slowly close again. Beat.

Lucius rises to his feet. He walks across the cabin to the door.

AUGUST(o.s.)

-my wife and I, we used to
throw dinner parties.

Lucius looks back. August stares sleepily at him.

August's words are so soft, the crackle of the fire almost covers them.

AUGUST
(quiet)
-in town.
(beat)
We served pastries with cream
in them.

Lucius waits till August is asleep again. The young man's green eyes stare quietly at the wilting man.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER - NIGHT

We are at the edge of the village. Yellow cloth flags are attached to the trees that create the natural border between the grassy slopes and the woods. The yellow flags and torch lit lamp curve into the distance as far as one can see.

A fifteen-year old boy in overalls stands on a stump right at the edge of the grass. His back is to the woods. His arms outstretched at his sides. His body makes the form of the crucifix. He is trembling.

YOUNG MAN(o.s.)
He has tears in his eyes,
Christop.

A group of young men are huddled behind a rock ten feet down the slope and watch the fifteen-year old standing on the stump.

CHRISTOP CRANE is a thin, tall, very neatly combed young man.

CHRISTOP
He's doing capitol. Just a few
more moments...

The young men fight each other for the best view.

CHRISTOP
Do not jostle about so. You'll
ruin my shirt.

The fifteen-year old's eyes are filling with water. He's straining to hold up his arms.

WE ARE IN THE DARKNESS OF THE WOODS. WE ARE BEHIND THE BOY. WE SEE THE SILOHUETTE OF HIS SLIGHT FIGURE STANDING ON THE TREE STUMP.

The boy makes a noise – a slight whimper. A NOISE IS HEARD FROM THE WOODS.

The boy stiffens. He whispers out to the boys behind the rock.

BOY ON STUMP
(loud whisper)
They made a sound when I
made a sound. They mimic
before they attack.

Christop pops his head out.

CHRISTOP
(loud whisper)
That's a wives tale. It isn't true.
Do not falter... A few moments
more.

A BRANCH SNAPS IN THE WOODS. The fifteen-year old's eyes flick up. All the heads from behind the rock peek out.

The boy LISTENS desperately. He wants to look behind, but he doesn't.

THERE ARE NOISES IN THE WOODS. THE SOUND OF LEAVES BEING CRUNCHED.

The boy begins to shake.

A LARGE BRANCH SNAPS. The fifteen-year old lets out a SMALL SQUEAL as he lowers his arms and jumps from the stump. He starts running.

He runs past the young men hiding behind the rock. As he does, they start running too. Everyone evacuates in a hurry. They all start racing down the slope back to the FIRE LIGHTS FLICKERING in the distance from the village.

CUT TO:

INT. VILLAGE COURTYARD – NIGHT

The gang of young men, are moving at a fast walk through the courtyard, trying to catch their breath. The fifteen-year old walks in the center receiving various pats on the back. His face is still ashen.

The group walks by a contemplative Lucius.

He doesn't look up as they pass in a flurry of youthful conversation.

Lucius moves silently in the opposite direction, the weight on his shoulders, almost visible.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD FIELD – DAY

The mentally handicapped young man we saw clapping at the supper table is wrestling in the dirt with two young men who try to restrain him.

He is strong and quick. The two young men end up in the dirt over and over as the mentally handicapped young man slips them and throws them down.

The children watch the dust and dirt kick up as the three continue scuffling.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

A trail of dark blood runs down the forehead of a hysterical child. Kitty gently escorts him off the playground.

They pass Ivy seated on a bench that overlooks the back of the schoolyard.

Kitty speaks over her shoulder as she climbs the steps into the school building.

KITTY

Noah ought to be punished. He wacked little Joseph with a stick again.

Ivy nods. Kitty and JOSEPH disappear into the school building.

Ivy takes hold of the wooden cane lying next to her. She rises from the bench. She moves towards the NOISE OF THE PLAYGROUND. The wooden cane moves deftly back and forth in front of her.

Her STRIKING BLIND EYES focus on nothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The wrestling has gotten fierce. NOAH PERCY is almost pinned when he suddenly throws them and frees himself. The two young men immediately go for his legs.

IVY

Noah Percy, stop your fussing right this moment.

Noah stops and stares at Ivy.

The two young men on the ground stop. They realize they are holding each other's leg.

Noah stands as the two young men lie on the ground. Noah smiles sweetly at Ivy.

CUT TO:

EXT. QUIET ROOM - DAY

A heavy lock is undone. The tall wooden door swings open. We look into a small cabin. It has only one room. It has a wooden chair in the center. A few potato sacks have been piled in the corner. The room is dusty.

Ivy and Noah stand and look in. Noah holds her arm.

IVY

You're in trouble you know?

NOAH

No hitting.

IVY

I'm to place you in the quiet room.

NOAH

-I'll cry quarts.

IVY

What if we strike a deal?

NOAH

Capitol Capitol ideal!

IVY

It would be prudent to keep our deal a secret. Can you do that?

NOAH

Like a church mouse.

This makes Ivy laugh. Noah laughs too.

IVY

You needn't go to the quiet room if you take an oath to never strike any person again.

NOAH

No hitting.

Ivy puts out her hand to shake.

IVY

No hitting.

Noah shakes hands, up and down big, like the elders do.

Ivy taps her cheek. Noah leans down, for he stands a good six inches taller than her, and kisses her softly once.

IVY

The deal is struck.

Noah is beaming. Ivy closes the door to the quiet room.

IVY

We ought not return right away.
What shall we do with our stolen time?

(beat)

Shall we have a foot race? Up the hill to the resting rock.

NOAH

No cheating.

IVY

What a deeply scandalous thing to say. I insist you take that back... Is that the school bell?

Noah looks back. Ivy takes off. She's a good ten feet down the path before he turns to see her not there.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTING ROCK - DAY

Noah is bigger, stronger and faster, but he has a hard time catching the blind young woman running ahead of him. She moves effortlessly. She does not use her stick. She knows every step of these hills. She taps a tree as she runs by. She is laughing as she runs.

Noah passes her just as they finish. They both are out of breath as they reach the rock formation.

One rock juts out at the base of an enormous wall of rock buried into the side of the hill. There is shade here. This is Resting Rock.

There is someone sitting there when they arrive. Noah goes right over and sits with him. Ivy sits and catches her breath before looking in their direction.

IVY

My sister cried a lot.

Lucius stops eating the biscuit he has wrapped in his handkerchief for his lunch break. Beat.

IVY

Do you wonder how I
recognized you.

Lucius stares at the striking girl with the sweaty face and messed hair.

IVY

Some people, just a handful
mind you, give off the tiniest
color. It's faint, like a haze. It's
the only thing I ever see in the
darkness. Papa has it too.

Lucius gazes quietly at Ivy as if she was a sorcerer. Noah just smiles. Beat.

IVY

Do you wonder what your color
is? Well that, I won't tell you.
It's not ladylike to speak of
such things. You shouldn't
even have asked.

Lucius fights a smile. Noah runs off after some nearby birds.

Ivy smoothes her wrinkled, dusty frock. It is an uncharacteristic nervous gesture.

IVY

(serious)

I know why you denied my
sister.

Lucius' smile melts away.

IVY

When I was younger you used
to hold my arm when I walked.
Then suddenly you stopped.

(beat)

One day, I even tripped in your
presence and nearly fell. I was
faking of course, but still you
did not hold me.

IVY

Sometimes we don't do things
we want to do, so that others
won't know we want to do
them.

Lucius is about to say something when Noah comes back. Noah sits down between them. Lucius turns his piercing eyes back to his biscuit.

Noah reaches into his pocket. He clutches something in his hand. He puts it into Ivy's lap.

IVY

What's this?

She feels it in her hands.

IVY

A flower, what a splendid present.

Lucius glances over. He goes still. Beat.

LUCIUS

(low)

Be cautious. You are holding the bad color.

Ivy's face changes as she holds the RED FLOWER.

IVY

(even)

Noah it is not allowed. This color attracts Those We Don't Speak of. You must bury it.

She holds it out to a saddened Noah. Her hand is trembling slightly. He takes it back after a moment.

IVY

You ought not to pick that color flower anymore.

Lucius gazes at the flower in Noah's hand.

LUCIUS

He did not pick that now.

Beat. Ivy's head turns a quarter turn towards Lucius.

IVY

What's wrong? You're
breathing has changed.

LUCIUS

I've never set eyes on such a
flower.

Lucius and Noah look at each other. Beat.

LUCIUS

(quiet)

Noah... where did you find
this?

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER – AFTERNOON

Ivy's fingers trace along Noah's arm. She finds his hand. She moves over his finger that is pointing. She turns and faces that direction.

Beat.

IVY

Are you sure?

Noah nods.

NOAH

No cheating.

Ivy, Noah, and Lucius stand at the top of the hill and stare. Beat. Lucius turns and starts walking down the hill.

LUCIUS(v.o.)
My mother is unaware of the
reason for my visit today. She
did not give her consent-

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

WALKER
Lucius.

Lucius' green eyes look up from his paper.

WALKER
You do not need to address us
so formally. You may just
speak.

Lucius stares at the group of elders seated on the wooden chairs before him. Alice watches her son lower the paper at his side. He just stands there. Beat.

LUCIUS
We mustn't-

Lucius eyes drift down. He tilts the paper slightly as he tries to read the words at a steep angle at his side.

LUCIUS
We mustn't-

Edward smiles.

WALKER
Lucius, you may read from the
paper if you wish.

Lucius brings the paper back up.

LUCIUS

-or consult me in any form.

(beat)

Today at Resting Rock. Noah
Percy handed Ivy Walker a
flower of the bad color.

Edward Walker sits up just a bit at the sound of his daughter's name.

LUCIUS

When asked where he found
this flower, for it was not like
others I have seen, he took us
there. He led us to the peak of
the hill, by the tree stump.
There he pointed to a bush
covered in flowers of the bad
color.

Lucius looks up. He doesn't look down when he says the next six words.

LUCIUS

He was pointing into Covington
Woods.

Lucius returns his eyes to the paper.

LUCIUS

By my eye, the bush of the bad
color was, at the very least,
seventy-five paces past the
forbidden line.

Beat.

LUCIUS

It is my belief that Noah Percy
has entered the woods, and has
done so on many occasions.

LUCIUS

It is also my belief, that because of his innocence, those creatures who reside in the woods did not harm him.

(beat)

This strengthens my belief that they will let me pass if they sense I am not a threat. I ask for further consideration in my request to travel into the woods so that I may gather medicines and informations from the nearby town.

Lucius slowly lowers his paper. He exhales very slowly. The elders just stare.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - AFTERNOON

Noah makes monster sounds. He holds his hands up like claws as he slowly chases the pack of laughing and screaming children around the playground.

The group of elders have gathered at the edge of the schoolyard. They watch Noah carefully as he runs around with the other children.

Noah bares his teeth and growls as he catches one of the laughing ten-year-old boys in the pack. Noah picks him up and throws him to the ground hard. The child starts crying.

TEACHER

Noah Percy!

Noah stops acting like a monster. He runs and hides behind the other children.

The elders watch as the teacher pulls Noah off the schoolyard. Noah is throwing a slight tantrum as he is led to his punishment.

CUT TO:

INT. HUNT CABIN - NIGHT

Alice Hunt sits at her small table. Hands folded on her lap.

ALICE

We shall speak of the town, just
this once, and we shall never
speak of it again.

Lucius sits across from her. His eyes flicker from the lamp light on the shelf.

ALICE

When we lived there, the three
of us, you were but an infant. I
would be telling an untruth if I
said there was no joy. We were
contented souls: the three of
us... But contentment is an
unwelcomed alien in the towns.
There is something in the very
nature of the cities and towns
that rejects it. Society survives
on greed, and desire. Its heart is
fed by wants. It has no place
for something so untradable
and old fashioned as
contentment.

(beat)

Your father left for the market
on a Tuesday at quarter past
nine in the morning... He was
found robbed and naked in the
river two days later.

Lucius is shaking.

LUCIUS
(barely audible)
Why do you tell me this
blackness?

ALICE
So you will know the nature of
what you desire.

LUCIUS
I do not desire it!

Alice is sincerely unsettled by the sight of her son on the verge of yelling.

LUCIUS
My intentions are true to my
word. I think of nothing but the
people of this village.

Alice lowers her eyes. Beat. She speaks in a softer voice.

ALICE
I know that. Forgive me. I am
but scared for my only son's
life.

LUCIUS
I am not the one with secrets.

Alice's eyes lock on his.

ALICE
What is your meaning?
(beat)
Speak! Do not retreat to your
silence yet.

Lucius stands from the table. He moves across the small room.

LUCIUS

There are secrets in every
corner of this village. Do you
not feel it? Do you not see it?

Lucius points to the black box seated in the corner of the room on a small table. It is identical to the one we saw in August Nicholson's house.

ALICE

That is for our own well being.
So the things that scare us do
not have power over us.

LUCIUS

Then let us open it.

ALICE

No-

Alice looks ready to rise from her chair to stop him. Lucius doesn't move.
Beat.

Alice visibly composes herself. Her hands return to her lap.

ALICE

(soft)

Perhaps we should speak with
Edward Walker together. He
may-

LUCIUS

He hides too.

Alice stares quietly at the stranger before her.

LUCIUS

(soft)

He hides his feelings for you.

Alice instantly rises from the table and moves into her room with great dignity.

LUCIUS

(calls to her)

Sometimes we don't do things -
yet others know we want to do
things - so we don't do them.

Lucius doesn't even understand what he said. Alice walks back out of her room.

ALICE

What nonsense are you saying?

Lucius is flustered. He gathers his thoughts and looks to his mother. Beat.

LUCIUS

You needn't worry. Nothing
will happen to me.

Alice gazes upon her son.

ALICE

(gentle)

You remind me of a colt
sometimes.

Alice moves back to the chair she started in. Lucius takes his seat across from her. Beat.

Alice cleans some dust off the table as she speaks.

ALICE

What makes you think he has
feelings for me?

Beat. Lucius thinks of other things as he says the words.

LUCIUS
He never touches you.

Alice shakes her head, "No" to herself. They both sit at the table plowing through their own thoughts. CANDLIGHT flickers on this painting of a mother and son at a wooden table.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER - DAY

We are at the edge, where the grass ends and the woods begin. On every tree that touches the grass is a yellow slash of paint. Every fourth tree holds a flag of the same color.

Two young men replace a broken flag. They both wear hooded cloaks that touch the ground. The cloaks are a mustard-yellow.

The young man, who has been boosted up, loses his balance. He quickly grabs a branch and steadies himself. He looks down to his partner. They share a tension filled look as they glance into the forest. They work as if they are on a tight wire.

A third young man in a mustard yellow cloak passes them. Lucius carries a wooden bucket of yellow paint. He nods to them as he passes.

Lucius walks along the perimeter of trees. He stops a handful of trees down the line. The paint on this tree is fading. Lucius dips the handmade brush into the bucket and puts another coat on the tree.

He picks up his bucket and continues on. He glances over his shoulder as the figures of the two young men get smaller and smaller. Lucius keeps walking.

He passes the large tree stump.

Now he slows to a stop again. He looks to the woods... Seventy five paces away from where he stands, nestled between two thin trees, is A BUSH BLOOMING WITH RED FLOWERS.

 He looks down the line of trees to the two young men; they move along the perimeter and slowly move out of sight.

Lucius steps to the edge of the grass. His shoes are inches away from the dirt of the forest floor. In the dirt, clearly visible to the eye, are groups of **LARGE CLAWED FOOTPRINTS**. The indentations from the claw points dig deep into the soil.

Lucius does not acknowledge any of this. He stares quietly into the woods, lowers his bucket to the ground. Beat.

HE STEPS OVER THE FORBIDDEN LINE INTO COVINGTON WOODS.

Lucius walks calmly. His shoulders graze branches as he moves. His eyes stay locked on the bush with red flowers.

WE HEAR A NOISE IN THE WOODS. Lucius does not look over.

 He takes the last few steps to the bush. He reaches into it and snaps off a branch. He straightens up.

And then for the first time we sense him pausing.

He turns and looks slowly over his shoulder.

THERE IS SUDDEN MOVEMENT. LEAVES AND BRANCHES SNAP AS WE SEE, FIFTY FEET AWAY, THE DARK FORM OF A HUMPED CREATURE, STANDING UPRIGHT. IT SUDDENLY MOVES. WE SEE IT STRIDE AWAY INTO THE DENSENESS OF THE WOODS.

Lucius turns and starts walking. Branch in hand, he moves at a calm even pace as he heads back to the bucket with yellow paint.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH – NIGHT

 Lucius moves along a walking path. He passes by a **LAMP LIGHT**.

He gets pulled from the strong current of his thoughts by the rattling of a bush. He sees someone crawling around in the foliage.

GIRL'S VOICE FROM BUSH
There is no escape.

Lucius watches as Ivy Walker crawls out and stands. She looks in Lucius' direction.

IVY
Oh Hello.

Ivy runs her hands over her frock. Dirt and leaves fall off.

IVY
I was just playing a game with Noah. The rascal must have gone to hide in my house again. Houses are against the rules. He knows that.

Lucius stares at Ivy who has dirt and leaves in her hair. She bends down and picks up her cane.

IVY
Are you okay? Your quiet is a different quiet than your usual quiet.

Lucius nods.

IVY
I assume you're nodding.

Ivy smiles.

IVY

Well I better get back home and
confront the scoundrel.

(beat)

You could walk with me if you
like.

There is an awkward moment.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKER BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Ivy and Lucius arrive in silence to the back porch of the Walker cabin. In the LAMP LIT windows we see Kitty and her younger sisters talking.

IVY

We are tending to the children
tonight, Kitty and I... I should
be with her.

(beat)

Be well.

Ivy climbs the stairs and stops.

IVY

I heard my parents speaking of
you. I know of your request to
go to the towns. I think it is
noble, but I do not think it is
right.

Beat.

LUCIUS

There may be things we do not
know that may help us.

IVY

You speak as if we are plagued.
There is nothing to cure.

Beat.

LUCIUS

Are you not angry you have no
sight? Perhaps your eyes could
have been saved as a child by
knowledge held in the town's
medicines.

IVY

I know it upset Pappa very
much when it happened to me.
He would not speak for three
days I was told. But it does not
bother me Lucius.

LUCIUS

What of Noah then? What if
there was medicines for Noah
that could help him be still?
Help him learn?

Beat. This affects Ivy.

IVY

May we stop speaking of this?
It is putting knots in my
stomach.

Lucius nods. Ivy climbs a few more steps and stops.
She turns.

IVY

Kitty is to be married.

Lucius looks a little confused.

IVY

She has found love again. With
Christop Crane.

Lucius raises his eye brows.

IVY

(soft)

You think it an odd choice
right? You know he won't sit
back in his chair for fear of
setting wrinkles his shirts.

(beat)

But he does have a gentlemanly
way about him and he does care
for my sister deeply. I think
Kitty is blessed.

IVY

I am blessed as well... My
older sister is now spoken for. I
am now free to receive interest
from anyone... who might have
interest.

Lucius stares at the striking blind girl who stands in the shadows with a
mischievous smile.

IVY

(soft)

Goodnight Lucius Hunt.

Ivy turns and walks into the house. We see through the open back door as
Noah leaps out from behind a water basin and scares her. Ivy starts chasing
the tall boy around the room playfully.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

Finton Coin sits huddled in the corner of the tower perch. His knees are tucked into his chest. There is an oil lamp on the floor by his side.

The oil lamp moves as the tower creaks. Finton sits up. THE LAMP LIGHT ON FINTON'S TENSE FACE FLICKERS AND THEN RETURNS.

FINTON

Lucius?

SILENCE. Finton crawls over to the trap door in the floor. He listens a moment before reaching for the rope handle.

He pulls back the wooden door slowly.

Finton looks down the ladder that drops twenty feet away to the ground. The thick legs of the tower can also be seen.

FINTON

Lucius?

SOMETHING PASSES UNDERNEATH. IT IS DARK IN FORM AND MOVES DEVILISHLY QUICK INTO THE SHADOWS.

All the air leaves Finton Coin's lungs.

Finton shuts the trap door quietly. He moves the wooden bolt into the lock position. All his movements are slow and trancelike.

Finton places his hands on the railing and pulls himself up. He steadies himself on his feet. And then peers over the railing.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

People of the village move normally through the courtyard.

AND THEN THE WARNING BELL SOUNDS IN THE DISTANCE. IT IS VERY DIFFERENT THAN THE PRACTICE BELL IN THE YARD. ITS SOUND IS DEEPER MORE POWERFUL AND RESONANT. ITS SHORT REPEATED RINGING ECHOES THROUGH THE AIR.

Everyone in the courtyard suddenly freezes and then starts running.

Everyone except Lucius. He turns and looks over his shoulder towards the direction of the tower.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN – NIGHT

Kitty and Ivy look up as they dress their little sisters for bed.

THE DISTANT REPEATED SOUND OF THE WARNING BELL silences all the chatter.

Beat.

Kitty turns to Ivy.

KITTY
(low)
Close all the doors.

Kitty scoops her little sisters off their bed and moves directly towards the trapdoor in the back of the cabin.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABINS – NIGHT

Lucius ushers a group of people into a cabin. He closes the door and shuts them in. He moves quickly across the path to a woman who tries desperately to close the shutters on her cabin. The shutters stick on their rusty hinges. Lucius comes over and closes it shut.

He turns as a SHADOW PASSES OVER HIM.

Lucius ducks into the darkness by the side of the cabin. There is movement all around him.

HE WATCHES AS A CREATURE MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS THE FRONT DOOR OF THE CABIN.

Lucius steps back farther into the shadows. He presses his back against the side of the cabin and loses sight of the creature.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN - NIGHT

Noah jumps up and down, agitated and excited. Kitty tugs at his arm as she pulls him towards the trap door. She looks across the cabin and sees Ivy standing in the open front door.

KITTY
(yells)
You must close the door!

Ivy looks out in the direction of the STRANGE SOUNDS.

IVY
Lucius is out walking.

Kitty leads Noah down into the crawl space where the two younger sisters wait frightened and silent.

KITTY
(yells)
He's inside safe somewhere.
Close the door!

Ivy turns and looks back at her sister, strain and strength on her face.

IVY
He'll come back to make sure
we're safe.

Kitty walks down into the underground room with Noah and the children. Only her head can be seen as she watches her little sister, across the cabin stand in the doorway to the outside.

Ivy puts out her hand through the open doorway. She holds it out to the darkness.

THE WARNING BELL RINGS OVER AND OVER IN THE DISTANCE.

STRANGE SOUNDS CAN BE HEARD THROUGH THE WALLS IN THE BACK OF THE CABIN.

Kitty listens to them, tears fill her eyes. Her head turns back to Ivy and screams across the cabin floor.

KITTY

Ivy please!

OUTSIDE:

THERE ARE SHADOWS ALL AROUND THE WALKER CABIN.

A HUMPED CREATURE EMERGES FROM THE DARKNESS. IT STARTS RUSHING TOWARDS THE PORCH.

Ivy holds her hand out as she stares blankly into the darkness outside. Tears stream down her face. She is terrified.

IVY

(soft)

No.

KITTY

Don't let them in!

THE LARGE DARKENED FIGURE OF THE CREATURE CLIMBS ONTO THE PORCH.

A HAND GRABS IVY'S HAND.

SLOW-MOTION: Ivy turns as Lucius moves with her through the doorway. They close the door shut quickly and bolt it. Lucius and Ivy run together across the cabin. Lucius never lets go of her hand.

They reach the open trapdoor. Lucius helps Ivy in and then follows her down. His arm spears out and grabs hold of the rope handle. The door shuts over their heads.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND ROOM - NIGHT

REAL TIME:

Six individuals huddle together in the darkness. A TINY STREAM OF LIGHT FALLS ON THEIR FACES.

SOUNDS OF SCRATCHING AND CLAWING CAN BE HEARD ON THE WALLS OF THE CABIN. THE DISTANT SOUND OF THE WARNING BELL IS MUFFLED IN THIS UNDERGROUND SPACE.

Kitty holds her little sisters tight. Noah claps his hands joyously in the small space he has to move.

Lucius and Ivy are crouched together close to the stairs. Their faces are almost touching. They both stare up at the crack in the door and listen. They both breathe hard; their breath falling on each other.

Ivy's face tilts slowly to her lap. Lucius' hand is still holding hers.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDER GROUND ROOM #2 - NIGHT

A large number of men and women are crammed together in another underground room.

THEY LISTEN AS NOISES AND GRUNTS MOVE AROUND THEM OVERHEAD.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND ROOM #3 - NIGHT

A group of children are huddled together in the darkness of another underground room. The children's hands cover their ears. They try to block out the SOUNDS STABBING AT THEM THROUGH THE CRACKS IN THE TRAP DOOR.

We see their tiny bodies jerk with every sound.

Their scared faces dissolve into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK:

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A gentle breeze pushes leaves around in circles. There is no one in the courtyard. There is no one on the walking path.

The front doors of the cabins are closed. On each door are TWO RED SLASHES OF COLOR FORMING AN "X". The crimson markings are seen throughout the empty village.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

All members of the village, young and old, are gathered together. THE SOUND OF SOME CHILDREN WHIMPERING can be heard in the tense silence.

Edward looks at the faces.

WALKER

We may question ourselves at times such as these. Did we make the right decision to settle here?

WALKER

We must remember why we
came here. It was for goodness
and a rare type of innocence.
That is worth a struggle I think.

(beat)

Let it be known for all to
comfort in, that no person was
injured last night. We have
always had, from the day we
settled here, a gentle
understanding with those who
visited us.

(beat)

I have always pictured them, in
some ways, as our protectors.
They have allowed us to live
here nestled amongst them in
this untouched place.

(beat)

By the markings we find this
morning on our homes, I feel
they were warning us. They
acted as if threatened. We will
do our best to discover what it
is that has set them to action.

Beat. Edward suddenly looks older. His childlike eyes flicker with emotion.

WALKER

(soft)

I myself wonder if this simple
way of life can go on... If it
was meant too...

August touches him on the shoulder in a brotherly way to stop him from
speaking. August looks out over the congregation.

AUGUST

If any want to talk of their
worries or concerns, we would
welcome them.

A note is passed from the gathering. Vivian Percy is the closest of the elders and accepts it. She checks the front and back for an inscription. She looks out over the room of faces.

VIVIAN

Who has written this note?

The room of faces do not respond. Vivian opens it.

Vivian turns to the elders at her side.

VIVIAN

It is the wish of the writer for
this to be read aloud.

They all nod. Vivian throws a quick look to Alice before turning back to the paper.

VIVIAN

(reading)

Please read so that all may hear.

(beat)

My mother is unaware that I
wrote this note. She did not
give her consent or consult me
in any form.

(beat)

I have brought this burden upon
us. On the day before last, I
crossed the forbidden line into
Covington Woods and was
witnessed there by Those We
Don't Speak Of.

Whispers fill the meeting hall. Alice closes her eyes. August looks down.

VIVIAN

(reading)

I am deeply sorry. I have
shamed myself and my family.
I pray that my actions will
cause no further pains.

(beat)

With deepest sorrow, Lucius
Hunt.

Ivy sits in the crowd. She stares blankly at a point in space.

There are nothing but murmurs for a moment. Edward Walker silently steps forward. The crowd moves aside as he walks through them.

He moves to the back corner, where the crowd parts and reveals Lucius sitting against the wall. His eyes are red. Tears fall from his cheeks.

Edward Walker kneels down in front of him.

WALKER

Do not fret.

Walker's face trembles with emotion as he stares at the young man. Edward Walker leans forward and whispers in the young man's ear.

WALKER

(barely audible)

You are fearless in a way, I
shall never know.

Lucius looks up. The two men stare at each other. The crowd goes quiet around them. The overwhelming pride and emotion in Edward Walker's eyes slowly start to change Lucius. He grows stronger with every second he gazes at his elder.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Vivian Percy claps her hands.

MRS. PERCY

Ta. Tee-tee. Ta.

CLASS

Ta. Tee-tee. Ta

MRS. PERCY

Splendid. Shall we take it from
the first phrase of the song?

She stares at the quiet faces of the children.

MRS. PERCY

It has been difficult to
concentrate, I admit. The visit
from Those We Don't Speak
Of three weeks past, are still
with us... I know some of you
are frightened still. This is why
our job is so vital. We must lift
everyone's spirits. Kitty
Walker's wedding will be a
glorious time. We will sing and
dance and be merry again.
Now let us be strong little souls
and begin the song again from
the very beginning.

The children nod gently. They are ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

A collection of fifteen men and women are constructing a wooden canopy.

Noah Percy helps cut a rope that tethers one of the frames of the canopy to a statue in the ground. An elder holds the rope and points. Noah slices it. He laughs when the rope splits. He waves the knife in the air joyously. The elder quickly takes the knife away from him and smiles.

Edward and Tabitha Walker guide the others as the two sides of the canopy-frame are brought up into their standing positions.

They look up at the structure for their daughter's wedding with wonder in their eyes. Beat.

They are gathered by the others and begin tying garlands of flowers to the frame.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTING ROCK - DAY

Lucius unwraps his biscuit form his handkerchief.

IVY(o.s.)
I know you have been ignoring
me.

Lucius looks up to find Ivy standing before him.

IVY
It is the day of my sister's
wedding and I am beginning to
believe you would let the day
pass without saying a word to
me.

Lucius doesn't say a word.

IVY
Perhaps you sensed I was angry
when you revealed you crossed
into the woods. In fact I was. If
you want to act foolish, that is

your choice. But I do not find any reason to risk such dangers in the woods for anything. It was wrong.

(beat)

I say this as your friend, because friends may say anything to each other.

Ivy lets out a breath.

IVY

I'm glad we've had a chance to talk.

(beat)

Kitty needs help getting ready. Enjoy your biscuit.

Ivy turns and walks away. Lucius' green eyes watch her as he brings the biscuit to his mouth.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUPPERTABLE - AFTERNOON

WALKER

We came here to start anew-
We are grateful for the time we have been given.

Edward Walker looks to Kitty at his side. Christop sits across from her. They are both dressed in white. Edward smiles to them as he takes a seat.

August stands. It is unexpected. Eyes watch him.

AUGUST

These are the experiences we came here to have. This is good. This is pure.

Beat. August takes a seat.

The table is covered in a feast of foods. Hands start reaching across the table. The business of a festive dinner begins.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BORDER - AFTERNOON

THE SOUND OF WOODEN FLUTES AND HAND MADE INSTRUMENTS CAN BE HEARD IN THE AIR.

Two young girls in mustard yellow cloaks lead two young men in hooded cloaks. The girls walk procession-like with flowers in their hands. The two young men carry a wooden box with rope handles.

The group stops ten feet from the border into the forest. The girls turn ceremonially together and wait for the young men to open the lid of the one-foot by one-foot square box. The girls then toss their flowers in the box and step aside.

The young men raise the hoods of their cloaks over their heads. The lid is closed and the box is picked up by its handles again. The girls stay where they are as the young men carry the box right to the edge of the forest.

There the lid is reopened. The two young men reach down and pull out the contents of the box. The flowers the girls threw in the box, trickle off the blood red surface of the LARGE SLAB OF MEAT.

The two hoods turn and look into the forest. About five feet into the forest is a large flat rock. Its surface is stained dark from dried animal blood.

The young men start swinging the meat to gain momentum. On the third swing, they throw the large slab of meat into the air and over the forbidden boundary. It makes a SOUND as it lands on the rock.

The young men glance at the forest for a moment, and then turn and walk back to the girls. They turn and start walking in a procession back down the hill and towards the MUSIC.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY - AFTERNOON

A canopy of flowers and vines has been made on the grass next to the stream. Candles hung by string are tied throughout.

A quartet of young musicians play on stools. Vivian Percy and the children sing next to them.

Kitty is dressed in a beautiful simple white frock. Christop looks neat and handsome. They stand on either side of August Nicholson who holds a weathered book in his hands. He quietly instructs the couple where to stand and what to do.

The some of the guests are seated in wooden chairs, some are seated in the grass.

Ivy is seated on the grass nearby with an older woman with thick gray hair. We have seen this woman sitting with the elders many times. This is MRS. CLACK.

MRS. CLACK

(whispers)

I had an elder sister.

Ivy turns to Mrs. Clack and smiles.

IVY

(whispers)

Mrs. Clack, you have been
keeping secrets.

MRS. CLACK

(whispers)

Kitty reminds me of her so.

IVY

(whispers)

What manner of person was
she?

MRS. CLACK

(smiles)

Saucy. We fought endlessly.

IVY

(smiles)

May I ask her name?

Beat.

MRS. CLACK

Your father created a miracle
here in this place. Sheltered us
from the darkness.

Ivy can hear the change in Mrs. Clack's voice.

IVY

Why did she not come to
Covington Woods?

MRS. CLACK

My sister did not live past her
twenty-third birthday. A group
of men took her life in an alley
by our home.

Mrs. Clack fixes her frock with her puffy hands.

August Nicholson turns to the congregation. He calls out.

AUGUST

Please rise.

Everyone in chairs and on the grass stands for the ceremony.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY - NIGHT

The MUSIC IS LIVELY. The musicians are up on their feet. People are dancing.

Kitty and Christop stand side by side and greet each family of the village. They are presented handmade gifts wrapped in twine. Kitty is glowing as she accepts the wedding gifts.

Ivy steps up and hugs her sister tight. Kitty hugs her back and lets go. Ivy keeps hugging. Kitty realizes Ivy is crying. Ivy kisses Kitty on the cheek and finally lets go. Kitty watch with confusion as her sister moves away.

CHRISTOP

She's not going to squeeze my shirt like that is she?

Kitty forces a smile and accepts the next gift.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY ENTRANCE – NIGHT

Edward and Tabitha Walker greet the elders that swarm around them and congratulate them.

Alice Hunt steps up and kisses Tabitha. She moves to Edward who finishes shaking a man's hand.

ALICE

Many blessings on this most joyous of days.

Alice puts out her hand.

EDWARD

It was a rare and lovely
ceremony, was it not?

ALICE

Glorious. I saw your hand
move to your eyes on more
than one occasion.

EDWARD

Must have been dust of some
matter.

Edward smiles at her. Alice smiles gently back.

She lowers her untouched hand back to her side. They both nod at each other. Alice steps away.

She is flustered. She holds her hands nervously as she walks. Alice turns and glances back over her shoulder.

Edward Walker is greeting Vivian Percy. HE SHAKES HER HAND as she congratulates him.

Alice turns back and keeps walking. She looks around to see if anyone is watching her. Her face is bright red with embarrassment.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY - NIGHT

The swirl of dancing captures more and more people.

Ivy stands to the side. Kitty's hand reaches out from the dancers. Kitty takes hold of her sister and pulls her in. Ivy resists for a moment and then lets herself join the celebration.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER - DUSK

Long deep shadows fall in the woods.

The two young men in yellow hooded cloaks walk the final steps to the edge of the forest. They look to the flat stained rock in the woods. THE SLAB OF MEAT HAS BEEN REMOVED. A fresh stain sits where the raw meat used to be.

The young men turn quietly and head back to the little girls. They lower their hoods. They nod their heads to the girls who then smile. The four start walking towards the music in two lines of two.

CUT TO:

EXT. SLOPE TO CANOPY - NIGHT

Lucius Hunt sits along the slope that leads to the wedding canopy. THE MUSIC AND LAUGHTER FLOAT THROUGH THE AIR.

He looks down to the CANDLELIT GLOW of the flowered canopy. Almost everyone is dancing.

SOMETHING MOVES IN THE DARKNESS BEHIND HIM.

Lucius looks back over his shoulder.

THERE IS A RUSTLE IN THE BUSHES ON THE SLOPE ABOVE HIM.

Beat.

LUCIUS

Who's come to visit me?

A LOW GRUNT. WE SUDDENLY HEAR SOUNDS OF SCURRYING.

Lucius rises to his feet immediately.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY – NIGHT

Ivy is in the thicket part of the dancing. Her hair has come loose from its upturned position. She laughs as she turns in circles with her sister and friends.

THE FIRST SCREAM MIXES WITH THE LAUGHTER AND DISAPPEARS.

The dancing goes on.

THE SECOND SCREAM CAN BE HEARD MUCH MORE CLEARLY.
Ivy is among the first few who stop dancing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SLOPE TO CANOPY – NIGHT

Lucius leans down and picks up an oil lamp that has been knocked to the ground. It is one of a few that have been strung along a walking path.

Lucius looks to Covington Woods in the distance. **THERE IS THE DISTANT SOUND OF BRANCHES SNAPPING.**

Lucius turns as the **SOUND OF A SCREAM CUTS THROUGH THE MUSICAL DIN FROM BELOW.**

He stares down at the warm glow of the canopy. He can see everyone has stopped dancing. There is commotion.

Lucius wheels in the direction of the tower. We see a young man in a yellow cloak standing sentry. We see him standing bored – elbows on the edge of the railing.

Lucius watches him for a moment, then turns back confused.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY - NIGHT

The dance floor is full of confusion.

A few YELLS SPIKE THE AIR.

Ivy is unintentionally bumped a few times as people start panicking. She is separated from her sister.

Ivy puts her arms out. She tries to move out of the knot of people.

PANICKED CONVERSATIONS GET LOUDER ALL AROUND HER.

She is bumped two more times. She struggles to keep moving in the crowd.

A HAND TAKES HOLD OF HERS. She feels Lucius leading her out of the congestion. She holds his hand tight as they move towards the entrance of the canopy.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Lucius and Ivy emerge amongst a group of elders that are gathered around two young boys. The boys are around ten years old. They are terrified. Everyone close at hand listens in hushed silence.

Edward Walker is seated in a chair. The boys stand before him at eye level.

BOY

They are in the village.

EDWARD

It cannot be.

BOY

It saw us. It ran off into the darkness.

WALKER

You are certain?

The boys nod. They are both crying. Beat.

Ivy moves next to her father. Edward takes her hand. Edward looks at the boys.

WALKER

You two boys stay close to Ivy here. She'll tell you some funny stories and have you laughing soon.

Ivy gathers the boys close as Edward stands. He turns to the worried crowd around him.

WALKER

We will go together. All of us.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - NIGHT

A SNAKE OF HANDHELD LIGHTS MOVE SLOWLY towards the village.

The members of the village move in a group led by the elders. Lucius walks towards the front holding one of the lanterns.

Kitty and Christop move in the middle and walk in tense silence.

The procession moves towards the DIM LIGHTS OF THE CABINS.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

The elders have already moved into the courtyard. They walk in stunned silence.

Lucius and the young men are the next to follow.

When Kitty arrives her hands move to her mouth. Christop stops in front of her.

THE COURTYARD BEFORE THEM IS LITTERED WITH DEAD ANIMALS. CHICKENS, AND SQUIRRELS AND RACOONS. THEY HAVE ALL BEEN SLAUGHTERED AND SKINNED. THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF SKINNED ANIMALS DANGLING FROM ROPES TIED TO THE POSTS OF THE HOUSES.

The villagers move like ghosts through their courtyard. Edward Walker moves amongst them. He walks up to one of the hung animals and with shaking hands, slowly unties the knot and lowers the animal to the ground.

A young man walks up to Edward Walker, hesitates and then taps him on the shoulder. GERALD speaks in a whisper when Edward turns.

GERALD
They would like you at the shed
sir.

Everyone is moving towards doorways. Christop is trying to pull a stunned Kitty through the chaos.

Elders usher people towards the nearest porch.

Lucius picks up two children in his arms and moves them to a doorway.

Ivy follows a group of people into a cabin.

Kitty stands in HER BEAUTIFUL WHITE WEDDING FROCK. Christop tugs at her arm. She finally is pulled across the littered courtyard and disappears into the darkness of a cabin.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Alice Hunt stands alone by the open entrance to the shed.

Edward Walker approaches her. She steps away so he may look inside. Edward steps into the doorway of the shed. He stares quietly into the shadows of the food shed. Empty cages hang open throughout the structure.

Alice speaks softly from outside.

ALICE

All the livestock has been
taken, and skinned. The fur and
feathers are missing.

(beat)

There are marks on the door,
where it was opened.

Edward's eyes move to the doorjamb. He sees the fresh torn wood at eye level.

ALICE

The marks are high. Coyotes
cannot reach that height.

Beat. Edward stares into the darkness of the shed.

WALKER

(soft)

Are you scared Alice?

ALICE

(whispered)

I am sir.

WALKER

(soft)

So am I.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANOPY - NIGHT

There is no one in the wedding canopy. THE CANDLES HAVE ALL BUT FLICKERED OUT.

A handful of chairs lay on their sides.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

Two young men stand in the tower. One man eats leftover cake from a wooden plate. He cuts a piece off and hands it to his partner.

They eat wedding cake as they stare into the darkened woods.

CUT TO:

INT. IVY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ivy lies in bed. She is awake. THE MOONLIGHT STREAMS IN THROUGH THE HALF CLOSED WOODEN SHUTTERS.

THERE IS THE SMALLEST OF NOISES OUTSIDE.

Ivy gets out of bed. She moves to the window slowly.

Her outstretched fingers reach the shutter first. She pushes the shutter open.

She stares out into the darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKER PORCH - NIGHT

Ivy walks out with a shawl over her night dress. She moves to Lucius who sits on the stairs of the porch.

He turns as she sits down next to him. Beat.

IVY

The elders are going to have an inquiry tomorrow. Each member of the village is to be questioned in the meeting hall.

LUCIUS

To see how the border was breached?

IVY

Yes.

Lucius nods silently. Beat.

LUCIUS

It is cold outside. You ought to go in.

IVY

Why are you on this porch?

LUCIUS

It is not safe.

IVY

There are other porches.

Beat. There is an awkward moment. Ivy searches for something to say.

IVY

Do you find me too much of a tomboy?

Lucius shakes his head lightly, "No."

IVY

I do long to do boy things.
(whispers)

Like that game the boys play at
the stump. They put their backs
to the woods and see how long
they can wait before getting
scared. It's so exciting.

(softer)

I understand you hold the
record. It will never be broken
they say.

LUCIUS

It's just children's games.

IVY

How is it you are brave when
all the rest of us shake in our
boots?

LUCIUS

I do not worry about what will
happen. Only what needs to be
done.

Beat.

LUCIUS

How did you know I was here.

IVY

I saw you out the window.

(beat)

No, I won't tell you your color.
Stop asking.

Beat. The wind blows stronger. They see leaves move all around them.

IVY

When we are married, will you
dance with me?

Lucius looks at her.

IVY

I find dancing very agreeable.

Beat.

IVY

Why can you not say what is in
your head?

LUCIUS

Why can you not stop saying
what is in yours?

Ivy is surprised by the strength in Lucius' voice.

LUCIUS

Why must you lead, when I
want to lead? If I want to
dance, I will ask you to dance.
If I want to speak, I will open
my mouth and speak. Everyone
is forever plaguing me to speak
further. Why? What good is it
to tell you, you are in my every
thought from the time I wake?
What good can come from my
saying I sometimes cannot
think clearly or do my work
properly? What gain can rise
from my telling you the only
time I feel fear as others do is
when I think of you in harm?

LUCIUS

That is why I am on this porch
Ivy Walker. I fear for your
safety before all others.

(beat)

And yes I will dance with you
on our wedding night.

Ivy sits in the moonlight. Tears stream down her cheeks. A hand reaches out and wipes a tear. This causes more tears to fall.

Lucius Hunt leans forward and kisses Ivy Walker on the porch of her father's home.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER BEDROOM - MORNING

Ivy and Kitty sit on their old bed together. Ivy squeezes her sister's hand.

IVY

Kitty, I wanted to speak with
you first. I would not want you
to feel pain in any fashion. You
are my cherished one. If you
were to feel badly about
Lucius, I would not have it.
One love to sacrifice another
love is not right.

The two sisters sit quietly. Kitty moves the stray hairs from Ivy's face.

KITTY

(soft)

Do not fret, younger sister.

Ivy closes her eyes.

KITTY

There is nothing you can do
that would sacrifice my love for
you. You are my cherished one
as well.

(Kisses Ivy on the head)
God bless you and your life
together.

The two sisters sit holding hands in the room they used to share.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - MORNING

A woman in her twenties stands before a committee of five elders.

WOMAN

...I had been to the storage
shed twice to fetch food prior to
the wedding ceremony.

ALICE

And the livestock was
untouched at that time?

WOMAN

Yes Mrs. Hunt. All was as it
should be.

Beat. Alice nods.

WOMAN

Could this be a new creature?

ALICE

What do you mean?

WOMAN

If there are Those We Don't
Speak Of in the woods, could
there not be yet another
creature, similar, but different
to our own creatures.

August Nicholson and the rest of the elders stare quietly at the woman. Beat.

ALICE

I suppose it is possible.
(beat)
Thank you Beatrice.

BEATRICE nods and starts out.

BEATRICE

I beg your pardon...

The elders look up to find Beatrice still in the meeting hall.

BEATRICE

Is it true, about Lucius and Ivy?

Alice is taken a little off guard.

BEATRICE

There are whispers all over the
village.

She glances to Edward and Tabitha who smile back. Alice turns to the woman.

ALICE

We were informed early this
morning of their intentions.

BEATRICE

It is amazing to witness which
two people love chooses to
unite. It follows no rules.

ALICE
(soft)
No it doesn't.

Alice gently looks down.

BEATRICE
God bless them both.

ALICE
Thank you dear.
(smiling)
Please ask the next person to
enter.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEETING HALL - MORNING

A line of villagers wait patiently outside the doors of the meeting hall cabin.

Beatrice walks out and lets the next person in.

CUT TO:

INT. HUNT CABIN - MORNING

Lucius Hunt opens the front door to his cabin.

LUCIUS
What's happened?

Noah Percy stands in the doorway sobbing. Beat.

Noah walks in. Lucius closes the door.

LUCIUS
Is this about Ivy and myself?

Noah doesn't answer. Beat.

Lucius heads back to his desk. Lucius folds the piece of paper he was writing and places it in the drawer.

LUCIUS
I know you are very fond of
her.

Noah shakes his head. He moves to Lucius.

LUCIUS
I know she is fond of you.
(turns)
There are different types of
love Noah-

Lucius barely sees THE SHARP BLADE.

NOAH AND LUCIUS STAND EYE TO EYE. BEAT. NOAH PULLS OUT THE BLADE FROM LUCIUS' STOMACH.

WE WATCH LUCIUS FOLD TO THE FLOOR OF HIS CABIN.

NOAH, STILL CRYING, CHANGES THE GRIP ON HIS KNIFE AND BENDS DOWN OVER LUCIUS.

CUT TO:

INT. PERCY BEDROOM - MORNING

Vivian Percy is helping Robert with his vest. She gently straightens out his collar. They've done this routine many times.

THERE IS A NOISE FROM THE CABIN'S ENTRANCE.

VIVIAN

Noah, you'll be late for the meeting hall. Would you like your father to walk you there?

Robert Percy places his eyeglasses on.

VIVIAN

Noah?

CUT TO:

INT. PERCY CABIN - MORNING

WE ARE MOVING THROUGH THE PERCY CABIN. THE MAIN SITTING ROOM IS EMPTY. WE SEE THE FRONT DOOR IS OPEN. WE MOVE TOWARDS IT.

THERE IS A NOISE, A CREAKING THAT GROWS IN STRENGTH. WE MOVE TO THE FRONT DOOR AND THEN THROUGH IT.

WE ARE ON THE PORCH. THE CREAKING SOUND IS VERY LOUD. WE TURN AND SEE NOAH SEATED IN A ROCKING CHAIR. HE ROCKS BACK AND FORTH CREAKING ON THE NOISY WOOD OF THE PORCH.

HE TURNS AND LOOKS OVER WHEN HE FEELS HIS PARENTS PRESENCE.

VIVIAN AND ROBERT PERCY STAND FROZEN LIKE A BAD PAINTING.

NOAH POINTS AT HIS WET SHIRT.

NOAH

(whispers)

The bad color.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - MORNING

The elders look away from the man who stands before them. They turn to the SOUNDS OF COMMOTION COMING FROM OUTSIDE THE MEETING HALL CABIN.

The door opens, a short flustered man enters. THE NOISE AND GROWING COMMOTION SPILLS INTO THE MEETING HALL.

A couple of the elders stand.

FLUSTERED MAN

I beg your pardon-

EDWARD

What is it?

Beat.

FLUSTERED MAN

There has been an accident.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - MORNING

Ivy and Kitty step off their porch together. They make their way down the walking path. There is a GROWING SOUND OF VOICES ahead of them.

Two people come rushing past.

KITTY

Helen what is it?

One of the girls stops and comes back. She speaks in a frantic whisper.

GIRL

Noah Percy was found with
quarts of blood upon his clothes
and hands... The blood was not
his own and he will not speak
as to whose it is.

KITTY

Dear God in heaven.

HELEN runs off.

Ivy's face changes. Beat.

Ivy lets go of her sister's hand. She starts moving away.

KITTY

Ivy, where are you going?

Ivy does not respond. Her walk becomes quicker and quicker. Kitty stares after her as her sister breaks into a run.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

WE HEAR IVY COUNTING UNDER HER BREATH AS SHE RUNS.

IVY

Eighteen-nineteen-twenty-

On the twentieth step she reaches the end of the path and makes the turn around a cabin into the courtyard.

THERE IS COMMOTION ALL AROUND HER. SHE HEARS KNOCKS AND DOORS OPENING AND CLOSING. ELDERS YELL OUT.

AUGUST

(o.s.)

Are there any injured in here?

ALICE
(o.s.)

Has anyone been hurt in this
home?

Ivy runs past all the voices. She runs past all the frantic people and movement.

THE SOUNDS OF COMMOTION ARE BEHIND HER.

She crosses the entire courtyard, brushing people as she runs.

She reaches the quiet part of the village; the part not searched yet.

Her feet hit the walking path stones similar to the ones near her house.

She drops her walking stick and keeps going.

She reaches a turn in the path and goes in the wrong direction before realizing and changing directions. She starts running again. Her hair comes flying out from its bindings.

IVY
(exhales)
-Twenty-two- twenty-three.

She comes to a quick stop and puts her hands out. She feels the wood of the front door of the Hunt cabin.

She pushes it open.

CUT TO:

INT. HUNT CABIN - MORNING

She steps into the silent cabin.

IVY
Lucius?

Ivy uses her hands to find the first piece of furniture. It's a chair. She walks around it.

IVY
Lucius Hunt you answer me
this moment!

Ivy moves slowly across the room, heading towards Lucius' loft.

Her foot HITS SOMETHING. SHE STOPS.

She is now standing in the middle of the cabin. Ivy bends down and gropes with her hand. Her hand comes back dripping.

Ivy kneels to the ground and searches with her hands for Lucius' head. She finds his shoulders and pulls with all her strength to get him onto her lap.

THERE ARE VOICES AND NOISE OUTSIDE. FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD.

A young man steps into the doorway. He is instantly stopped by what he sees. He quickly runs away.

WE HEAR MANY FOOTSTEPS NOW.

Edward Walker is the first one in the doorway. He begins shaking his head violently. Tears instantly fall over his anguished face.

WE HEAR MORE FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

The area behind Walker gets filled with villagers.

Edward Walker gathers himself for a moment. He speaks to those closest behind him.

WALKER
Do not let Alice Walker come here.

A handful of those in shock behind him, leave.

Ivy Walker sits on the floor of the cabin with a bloodied lump of clothes and flesh in her arms. She looks in the direction of her father's voice.

IVY
(desperate)
I cannot see his color.

CUT TO:

EXT. SICK CABIN - DAY

The entire congregation of the village waits outside the sick cabin. Everyone is silent. All watch the windows of the narrow cabin.

A FLAG OF WHITE FLIES at half mast next to the cabin.

Ivy walker listens TO THE SNAP OF THE WHITE FLAG.

A door to the cabin opens. Mrs. Clack walks out and approaches the group. She glances at Ivy and then looks to the group.

MRS. CLACK
It is best to be direct at
moments such as these. He has
suffered a great deal. He is very
weak. He may pass at any time.

Some women in the group begin to cry. Parents hold their children a little tighter.

MRS. CLACK
Please give him all your
prayers and good thoughts. He
will hear them.

Ivy concentrates on the SOUND OF THE FLAG. She listens to the RHYTHMIC SNAPS. Then slowly, her face begins to tremble. She finally begins to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. THE QUIET ROOM – DAY

The heavy wooden door to the quiet room is being unlocked. Robert Percy turns from the door. His face is an ashen. He steps aside.

Ivy moves to the door. She opens it.

Next to the sacks of potatoes, in the corner of shades, Noah Percy sits in the only chair in the room. His sits eerily straight up. When he sees who it is, he smiles. The CHAIR CREAKS AS HE STANDS.

Ivy walks straight to THE SOUND. She reaches for his face. Finds it... and CRACKS HIS FACE WITH A VIOLENT SLAP. Noah covers his face with his hands. She slaps him again and again. Her hand hitting his ears, his hands. She stands there hitting him. He stands there taking it.

Robert Percy takes hold of her and gently pulls her off him. After a moment, she stops raising her hand. She lets herself be quietly taken from the room.

The door is closed again. Locked again.

FROM INSIDE THERE IS A SUDDEN BURST OF SCREAMS. IT DIES DOWN TO A WHIMPER.

CUT TO:

INT. SICK CABIN – DAY

One of the oldest of the elders, VICTOR, stands near the door to the sick cabin with Tabitha and Edward Walker.

In the background we can see Alice Hunt sitting next to the only occupied cot. There are low sounds coming from the lump that is Lucius.

The three elders in the doorway, speak in whispers.

TABITHA

(whispers)

I am very worried for Alice.
She will not speak.

EDWARD

(whispers)

Her son is to die. There is
nothing to say.

Beat. Edward turns to Victor.

EDWARD

(whisper)

There is nothing to say. Victor
am I correct in that statement?

Victor shakes his head.

VICTOR

(whisper)

There were six wounds
inflicted. Five of the wounds
are not life threatening. The
sixth was made to the chest.
When I listen to his breastplate,
I cannot hear airflow as I
should. The sound is deadened.
He is having greater and greater
difficulty breathing.

EDWARD

(whisper)

What can be done to mend
him?

VICTOR

(whisper)

We can only pray.

Beat.

EDWARD

(whisper)

If there were no limitations,
what could be done?

Tabitha's eyes move to her husband's. Victor looks directly at Edward who stares back quietly. Beat.

VICTOR

(whisper)

What are you asking me?

EDWARD

(whisper)

Is there anything at all that can
be done to mend the boy?

Beat. Edward's eyes are tearing up.

EDWARD

(whisper)

Please Victor, would you be so
kind as to answer my
question...

Tabitha and Victor stare in stunned silence. Beat.

VICTOR

There is one other option.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKER PORCH - DAY

Ivy Walker sits still on a rocker on the porch of her cabin. She does not look over as her father comes onto the porch and stands by her. Beat.

IVY
Has he passed?

WALKER
No.

(beat)
You know the moment I heard
my child's vision had finally
failed her, and that she would
forever be blind, I was sitting in
that very chair.

(beat)
I was so ashamed.

IVY
(soft)
Why?

WALKER
(soft)
For not protecting you.
(beat)
Could we take a walk Ivy?

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - DAY

Edward and his daughter move along a walking path. Edward leads her off the path onto the grass. They continue walking.

WALKER
What do you know about your
grandfather?

IVY
He was the wealthiest man in
the towns.

WALKER

That he was. He had a gift for that. If he was given one dollar, in less than a fortnight he would have turned it into five. You do not know of money. It is not a part of our life here. Money can be a wicked thing. It can turn men's hearts black... Good men's hearts. My father could not see this. For all his gifts, he was a poor judge of a man's character. Your grandfather was a good man Ivy. He had a laugh that could be heard three houses away. He used to hold my hand as I hold yours.

(beat)

He taught me strength and showed me love and told me to lead when others would only follow.

(beat)

Your grandfather James Walker, died in his sleep. A man put a gun to his head and shot him while he dreamed. I tell you this, so you will understand some of the reasons for my actions and the actions of others.

(beat)

You are a strong one Ivy. You lead when others would follow. You see light when there is only darkness. I trust you among all others.

They stop walking.

 IVY

Thank you father.

WALKER

Ivy do you know where you
are?

IVY

At the old shed that is not to be
used.

They stand next to a worn shed hidden in tall grass.

Edward opens the lock on the small shed.

WALKER

Ivy...

 IVY

Yes father.

WALKER

Do your very best not to
scream.

IVY

What?

CUT TO:

INT. SHED - DAY

WE ARE IN THE DARKNESS OF A SHED. LIGHT POURS IN AS
EDWARD OPENS THE DOOR. He steps in.

He puts out his hand and helps Ivy inside.

 IVY

There is an odd smell.

WALKER

It is ahead of you.

IVY

What is it?

WALKER

I cannot explain in words.

(beat)

It is just a few steps.

Beat. Ivy steps forward. Her hands go out – searching. Her fingers reach into the shadows of the shed.

She touches something. Her hand glides over the GLISTENING FUR. Her fingers graze the TEETH. IT MOVES.

Ivy pulls back and stifles a scream with her own hands.

Edward catches her.

IVY

-Those We Don't Speak Of.

Edward holds her gently.

WALKER

Do not be frightened. It is only farce.

WE SEE IN THE DARKNESS NOW. HANGING FROM WOODEN RAFTERS ARE NINE OR TEN SUITS OF FUR AND CLAWS. EACH ONE HAS A HUMP – EACH HAS DARK AND LIFELESS EYES.

THE COSTUMES CREAK AS THEY SWING SLIGHTLY ON THEIR HOOKS.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND OLD SHED - DAY

Ivy is seated in the grass with her back to the shed. Edward stands near her.

WALKER

There did exist rumors of
creatures in these woods. It is
in one of the history books I
used to teach in the towns.

Ivy nods as if she understands.

IVY

The ceremony of meat.

WALKER

We remove it ourselves. An
elder is always assigned.

IVY

The drills? They are farce too?

WALKER

We did not want anyone to go
to the towns Ivy.

IVY

What about the animals? The
skinned ones? Are the elders
responsible for that too?

WALKER

It was not us. We do not know
what did that.

Beat.

Ivy's face begins to tremble. Edward kneels down.

Edward Walker reaches out and takes Ivy's hand in his. He places a TINY FOLDED PAPER in her hand and closes her fingers over it.

WALKER

(whispers)

On this paper has been written
a tool of medicine. It is
common in the towns.

Ivy looks up. Edward holds his hands tight over his daughter's closed fingers.

WALKER

(whispers)

Lucius Hunt will pass if he
does not receive this soon. He
may pass regardless.

(beat)

You are to go with two others
and follow the path near the
stream. A half day's journey
will bring you to a hidden road.
There, the two others will wait
as you continue. You alone will
follow the hidden road to the
end of Covington Woods.

(beat)

You are to tell no one in the
towns where we are and return
with haste.

(beat)

You gave your heart to this
boy. His mother is in need. Are
you ready to take this burden,
which, by right, is yours and
yours alone?

Father and daughter are crying. They are leaning towards each other now.
Their foreheads almost touching.



IVY
(whispers)

I do.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN – DAY

Edward Walker sits at the small table next to the stove. He waits outside the open door to Ivy's bedroom.

Through the doorway we see her packing a cloth bag. Her yellow cloak lies on the bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD – DAY



Ivy moves through the courtyard. Her walking stick moves steadily back and forth. Her cloth bag is stuffed and hangs against her back.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTING ROCK – DAY

Ivy sits in her yellow cloak. Her hood is up over her head. She sits on the enormous rock embedded in the base of the hill.

Her hand moves under her hood. She looks like she's wiping tears, but we cannot see her face.

Ivy just sits there... gathering strength.

THERE IS A NOISE. She looks up. Two cloaked figures emerge from the path. They stand in silence across from her.



CUT TO:

INT. SICK CABIN - DAY

Alice sits in a chair to the side of Lucius' bed. Lucius lies under the sheets asleep. His hair is damp. His face is white. His breathing is shallow and labored.

THE SOUND OF THE DOOR TO THE CABIN OPENING AND CLOSING CAN BE HEARD.

Edward walks into the cabin. He moves towards Alice and Lucius. They are the only three in the cabin. Beat.

EDWARD
(soft)
Alice, I have sent for help.

Alice looks up. Beat.

EDWARD
(soft)
I have sent Ivy to the towns.

Now Alice stands.

ALICE
(soft)
-You cannot

Alice starts crying. Edward wants to touch her. He leans towards her.

EDWARD
(soft)
It is all that I can give you.
(trembling)
...It is all that I can give you.

Alice looks at the man standing so close to her. She looks in his childlike eyes.

ALICE
(soft)
I accept.

They stand together, almost touching. They both are trembling. Beat.

Edward gently nods and steps away. Alice slowly takes a seat next to her son. She holds her son's hand tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER NEAR CREEK – DAY

Three cloaked figures move towards the line of trees at the start of the woods. The two large figures flank the smaller one. They all carry cloth bags on their back.

There is a creek to their right. It travels from the woods into their valley.

The three stop at the border.

We see their faces under their hoods. Ivy Walker is in the center. To her one side, is Christop Crane. To her other side is Finton Coin.

Ivy's fingers run over the yellow slash of paint on the tree bark. She listens and hears the SNAPPING OF THE YELLOW FLAG ABOVE HER. YELLOW FLAGS SNAP IN THE DISTANCE ON THE EITHER SIDE OF HER.

Finton glances to the soil and sees the claw marks in the dirt just in front of them. He looks over to Christop who has seen them too. Finton looks like he may faint on the spot.

Ivy is the first to move. She holds out her stick and takes a step. Her foot presses into the dirt amongst the large clawed footprints. The others follow.

Ivy steps into the woods. She makes it to her sixth step before Finton's trembling hand touches her shoulder. She turns to him.

FINTON

Christop.

Ivy turns and faces back the way she came. Christop stands on the other side of the border. He has not stepped into the woods with them.

IVY

Christop make haste.

Christop stands crying at the forbidden line.

CHRISTOP

(crying)

I beg your pardon.

IVY

You needn't be scared. You were told.

CHRISTOP

(crying)

I will be unable to join you.

IVY

They had costumes Christop.

FINTON

Please Christop, do not leave us.

IVY

There is nothing to fear.

CHRISTOP

-Then why do you wear the cloak of the safe color?

Finton looks at Ivy wearing her yellow cloak. Her hood is up. He realizes the truth in what Christop is saying.

IVY

We will light torches. It will be
safe.

Ivy stares in the direction of Christop's voice. Her eyes are steeled.

IVY

Do not worry what will happen.
Only what needs to be done.

Christop wavers for a second. Beat. He is still crying as he backs away.

CHRISTOP

(crying)

It is forbidden.

Finton watches as Christop backs away. He turns and moves down the slope out of sight. Beat.

IVY

Come if you are coming.

Finton turns and finds Ivy walking into the woods. Her walking stick taps trees as she moves.

Finton stands where he is. He lets her get ten feet away before running and catching up to her.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREE TOPS - DAY

We look down from the branches of the trees. Below us is a bed of leaves and dirt. The leaves come to life and begin swirling in agitation. The wind moves through the trees like a presence.

Down below, two specters in yellow move through the woods. Their hoods pulled tight over their scared faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK OF SICK CABIN – DAY

The elders have gathered behind the sick cabin.

They wait and watch as August Nicholson comes around the corner. He hurries over.

AUGUST

(whispers)

I had a difficult time getting
away.

(beat)

What is it?

Everyone turns to Edward. He gathers himself before he speaks.

EDWARD

(whispers)

I have sent Ivy to the towns to
retrieve medical supplies.

The elders are stunned. Mr. and Mrs. Percy stand like ghosts.

MRS. CLACK

What have you done?

EDWARD

Lucius has a chance-

MRS. CLACK

We have agreed, never to go
back – never.

EDWARD

What was the purpose of our
leaving? Let us not forget, it
was out of hope of something
good and right.

MR. PERCY

You should not have made decisions without us. You have gone too far.

EDWARD

I am guilty Robert. I made a decision of the heart. I cannot look into Alice's eyes and see the same look I see in August's. It is too painful.

August stares at Edward.

EDWARD

I cannot bare it.

MRS. CLACK

You have jeopardized everything we have made.

EDWARD

Yes I have. I hope I am always able to risk everything for the right and just cause. If we did not make this decision - we could never again call ourselves innocent. And that in the end is what we have protected here - innocence.

(beat)

That, I am not ready to give up.

Beat.

AUGUST

There is still hope.

Edward looks to August and smiles.

EDWARD
Yes there is my dear friend.

MRS. CLACK
How could you have sent her?
She is blind.

Edward stares at Mrs. Clack.

EDWARD
I sent her because I trust her.
And it is in her blindness that
our town's hope lives.

Beat. They all stand in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Two torches have been lit and sit atop two thick branches stuck into the ground.

We hear the SIZZLE OF TINY RAIN DROPS AS THEY HIT THE FOREST FLOOR. Ivy and Finton tie a heavy cloth tarp by its corners to nearby trees. They are racing the growing drizzle around them.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Finton and Ivy are seated with knees to their chests under the cloth tarp.

THE OVERWHELMING SOUND OF A DOWN POUR ECHOES THROUGHOUT THE FOREST.

Finton stares through the gray wall of pounding rain all around him. Everything is a blur.

In the haziness of the world of trees around him, THERE IS A THING OF DARKNESS. Finton leans forward a bit as he stares more intently.

Rain continues to cloud and obscure his view. THE THING OF DARKNESS FAR AWAY SEEMS TO FLICKER AND MOVE.

Finton's mouth opens a bit as he stares. THE THING OF DARKNESS SEEMS TO GET SMALLER AND THEN GETS WASHED AWAY BY THE RAIN.

Finton waits and watches. There is nothing to be seen but the constant downfall of rain. Beat. Finton turns to Ivy. She remains huddled and quiet. Finton turns back to the rain and looks around nervously.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT SITE – DUSK

The rain has stopped.

Finton stands with his bag over his shoulder. He peels away layers of soggy cloth from the torches.

FINTON

They are useless.

Finton turns and walks slowly over to Ivy who stands by the tent. Beat.

FINTON

Ivy.

IVY

You may go.

FINTON

Darkness will be here soon.

IVY

It is always here for me.

FINTON

It is not too late to return.

(beat)

There must be another way to
help Lucius.

Beat. Ivy continues to stand with her back to Finton.

FINTON

Do not pretend you do not feel
it. There is something in these
woods. It turns my stomach to
rot. The elders themselves
admit there were stories of
creatures in these woods long
before they arrived.

Ivy does not turn to face him. Beat.

FINTON

(emotional)

You will be safe. They will not
harm you because you cannot
see. They will take pity on you
as they took pity on Noah when
he ventured into the woods.

(beat)

They will kill me Ivy. I cannot
stay.

We see Ivy's face. She is frightened.

IVY

It is my burden, Finton. You
may go.

When she hears THE SOUND OF FINTON'S FOOTSTEPS RUNNING
AWAY, all she can do is close her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

The forest has turned to shadows and black. There is a small figure huddled under the cloth tarp. She is huddled under her yellow cloak. Her hood is pulled low over her face. She lets only her tired eyes peek through.

THE SOUND OF THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF CICADAS
FILL THE AIR WITH THEIR HIGH PITCHED VIBRATO. THE SOUND
SEEMS TO GET LOUDER AND LOUDER. UNNATURALLY LOUD.

Ivy has to cover her ears. Her head bows and we lose sight of her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

A slender hand is held out in the air. It slowly pivots till A PATCH OF SUN WASHES OVER ITS PALM. Ivy uses the heat from the sun to guide her direction.

Ivy's silhouette moves against the harsh slant of the morning sun.

Her cane moves back and forth in front of her.

Tap. She adjusts and moves around a tree. Her feet are stepping in mud. She keeps moving.

Tap. She adjusts and continues forward. Her left foot lands in deeper mud. She pulls it out and keeps going.

Tap. She changes position and takes a step. THERE IS NO GROUND WHERE SHE STEPS. HER HANDS GO OUT AS SHE FALLS. SHE GRABS THE EARTH AS IT SLAMS INTO HER ARMS.

SHE IS HANGING ON AN EDGE. SHE TRIES TO PULL HERSELF UP. THE GROUND IS ALL MUD – SHE BEGINS TO SLIDE. SHE FLAILS AS SHE DISAPPEARS INTO THE HOLE IN THE FOREST.

WE WATCH FROM ABOVE as she comes to a stop ten feet down the hole's wall.



CUT TO:

EXT. HOLE - MORNING

Ivy is in a hole about fifteen feet deep. At the bottom there are the SOUNDS OF WATER RUNNING OVER ROCKS.

Her walking stick has wedged into the roots of some trees that are sticking out in this hole in the ground.

Some loose rocks and dirt come free as Ivy finds her footing in the mud wall.

The debris falls to the rock floor.

Ivy catches her breath before pulling herself up.



CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS NEAR HOLE - MORNING

We see her stick climb over the edge of the hole. Her hand is the next in view as it takes hold of some roots to drag herself out.

She finds the base of a tree and moves to standing.

Her fingers travel over an unusual CROOKED BRANCH of the tree. She ducks under it and steps away from the hole.

She takes a couple heavy breaths... and begins to laugh. It is a tired laugh as she whips her hands at her sides to get the thick mud off her fingers.

She puts her hand to her cloak. It comes away full of mud... She slowly stops smiling. Her other hand goes to the surface of her cloak. It comes away with slick mud.



WE SEE IVY NOW, FULL FIGURE. HER CLOAK AND HOOD IS COATED IN MUD. HARDLY ANY OF THE SAFE COLOR YELLOW CAN BE SEEN.

Ivy starts wiping the mud from her cloak. Her movements are even at first and then become more desperate as her hands just slide over the slick mud.

We watch her in SILHOUETTE frantically trying to wipe off the mud.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The mud caked figure of Ivy moves through the forest. Her walking cane swings back and forth.

Tap. Crack.

Ivy stops walking. She runs her hand over the cane and finds it fractured three-quarters of the way down.

Her fingers tremble over the crack. She takes hold of each end and checks its strength. THE CANE SNAPS. THE SOUND ECHOES THROUGH THE AIR.

A moment later, WE HEAR ANOTHER SNAP SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY.

Ivy turns. Beat. She remains still under her hood. We watch as she slowly lowers to the ground. Her hand reaches out to the ground. Her fingers search the leaves. After a moment, her hand finds a rock.

She hesitates, and then throws the rock as far as she can. It lands with a CRUNCH IN A BED OF LEAVES.

Ivy stays crouched and listens. THE WIND RUSTLES. Beat.

AND THEN WE HEAR IT - THE IDENTICAL SOUND OF A ROCK LANDING IN A BED OF LEAVES SOMEWHERE BEHIND HER.

Ivy rises in terror. Her hood slips off her head as she starts to move. Her hands go out in front of her as she begins to run.

Branches slap at her arms and face. Her hand slams into a tree, she SCREAMS IN PAIN. She tries not to stop, she moves around it and keeps running.

Another tree catches her shoulder. She spins and almost falls to the ground. She clutches her shoulder as she gathers her balance. She keeps running.

She holds her hand up as she runs through a collection of small branches. They shatter against her forearm. She does not stop.

Ivy's hands start waving in front of her like her walking stick. She is running as fast as she can.

SHE PASSES INCHES FROM A LARGE TREE THAT WOULD HAVE CRUSHED HER. She keeps running.

The branches stop striking her arms. She is racing through a slight clearing. She is out of breath. She slows and stumbles to an exhausted stop.

She breathes slowly and looks around, listening in all directions. WE PULL BACK AND SEE SHE IS STANDING ALONG A HILLSIDE COVERED IN RED FLOWERS. THE BAD COLOR BLANKETS THE GROUND ALL AROUND HER.

Beat. AS HER BREATHING BECOMES SOFTER AND MORE NORMAL ANOTHER SOUND CAN BE HEARD.

IT IS ALSO BREATHING, BUT IT IS MORE ANIMAL IN NATURE – STRONG SNORTING SOUNDS – HORSE LIKE.

Ivy turns slowly in a circle till she finds the direction of the SLOW ANIMAL SNORTING.

Beat. STANDING FORTY FEET AWAY FROM HER IS THE LARGE DARK UPRIGHT FIGURE OF A HUMPED CREATURE. IT STANDS WITH ITS BACK TO IVY.

THIS CREATURE IS LARGER AND HAIRIER THAN THE COSTUMES THE ELDERS HAD.

THE CREATURE ROCKS A BIT SIDE TO SIDE LIKE ITS AGITATED.

Ivy moves ultra-slow. She begins backing up. She makes it a few feet before bumping up against the thick trunk of a tree.

THE CREATURE REMAINS WHERE IT IS, WITH ITS BACK TO US, ROCKING BACK AND FORTH.

Ivy edges around the trunk of the tree. She moves around it till she is hidden. **WE LOSE SIGHT OF THE CREATURE FORTY FEET AWAY.**

Ivy has her back to the bark. Her chest rises and falls with her panicked breaths. She listens. **WE CANNOT HEAR THE ANIMAL BREATHING.**

Beat. Ivy leans back around the tree slowly. **WE SEE FORTY FEET AWAY, THE CREATURE IS NO LONGER THERE.**

WE SUDDENLY HEAR A VERY LOUD ANIMAL SNORT.

Ivy jerks back.

Ivy's face tilts down. **WE SEE AT THE BASE OF THE TREE, AN ENORMOUS MOUND OF FUR. THE MOUND SHAKES AS IT BREATHES OUT LOUDLY. THE CREATURE LIES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TREE.**

Ivy is slowly going into shock. She's barely able to push herself away from the tree bark. She begins moving away from the tree ever so slowly.

Ivy begins the longest walk of her life. Her striking face remains quiet with exhaustion and fear as she keeps moving. The tree in the background behind her gets smaller and smaller.

She gets a hundred feet away before we **HEAR THE ANIMAL GROWL LOW AND MENACING.** Ivy stops. She has to turn and face the sound.

THE CREATURE IS NOW STANDING NEXT TO THE TREE. WE BARELY SEE ITS DULL LIFELESS EYES UNDER ITS FUR.

There the two face each other across a hundred feet of woods. There is a terrible stillness; the kind of stillness people often feel before something awful is about to happen.

Suddenly the creature starts moving in long and fast strides towards Ivy.

Ivy reacts too slow to the ON COMING SOUND. She turns and begins running...

THE ANGRY ANIMAL SOUNDS GAIN ON HER... SHE SCREAMS...

THE FIRST BLOW IS FAST AND SUDDEN. ALL WE SEE IS FUR AND CLAWS. IVY IS KNOCKED TO THE GROUND VIOLENTLY.

THE CREATURE CONTINES PAST HER MOVING INTO THE WOODS. WE SEE IT START TO TURN BACK ABOUT FIFTY FEET AWAY - LIKE A BULL IN A BULL FIGHT.

Ivy get ups. She has a set of fresh cuts along the side of her neck.

Ivy turns and runs into the thickest part of the forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. DENSE WOODS - DAY

Her hands go out again as branches and trees close in around her. She fights her way through.

HER OWN BREATHING, AND THE BREAKING OF BRANCHES AND THE CRUSH OF LEAVES FILL HER EARS AS SHE RUNS.

A tangle of branches from a clump of trees slows her. She slaps and strikes at the branches. They snap and break off.

She runs until she can run no more. She slows out of pure exhaustion. She comes to a stop. Her hands hold onto a thick branch in front of her as she rests.

THERE ARE NOISES BEHIND HER.

She is too tired to move. Her hands tremble on the branch.

THE NOISES GET LOUDER.

Her fingers slide over the CROOKED BRANCH. Her fingers stop with recognition. They go back over the crooked bend in the branch.

**WE HEAR LOUD MOVEMENT - GALLOPING IN THE DRY LEAVES.
BRANCHES SNAP QUICKLY BEHIND HER.**

Ivy steps around the branch. Beat. Ivy closes her eyes...

THE CREATURE STRIDES TOWARDS HER...

Ivy raises her arms at her sides. Her body makes the form of the crucifix. She stands steady as THE SOUNDS OF THE CREATURE RUSH TOWARDS HER...

She holds.

SHE HEARS THE SOUNDS OF THE BRANCHES BREAKING RIGHT BEHIND HER.

She holds.

THE CREATURE IS SUDDENLY UPON HER...

At the last possible second, she moves. It is fast and unexpected. HER FEET SLIDE ON THE MUDDY EDGE AS SHE DIVES QUICKLY TO THE SIDE...

THE CREATURE'S CLAWS JUST GRAZE HER MUDDIED ROBE AS IT DROPS INTO THE HOLE IN THE WOODS.

CUT TO:

INT. QUIET ROOM - DAY

The door to quiet room is unlocked. Robert and Vivian Percy open the door. They hold food in a wooden plate in their hands.

VIVIAN PERCY

Noah?

They step into the musty room. Their eyes go to the center of the room's floor. A handful of floorboards have been pulled up.

In the hole beneath the floor boards THERE ARE CHICKEN FEATHERS AND BITS OF ANIMAL FUR. A PATCH WHERE TWO FUR PIECES HAVE BEEN KNITTED TOGETHER LIES ON THE WOODEN FLOOR BY THE OVERTURNED FLOOR BOARDS.

Vivian Percy drops the plate of food.

In the back of the quiet room, the potato sacks have been pushed aside. Where they sat against the wall is an opening three feet in width and height. HARSH SUNLIGHT POURS IN THROUGH THE OPENING.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLE IN WOODS - DAY

The creature lies utterly still.

WE SEE THE CREATURE'S FUR IS RAGGED AND MADE UP OF DOZEN AND DOZENS OF ANIMAL FURS PATCHED TOGETHER.

THE CHICKEN FEATHERS THAT HAVE FILLED ITS HUMP HAVE SPILLED OUT OVER THE VIOLENTLY SHAPED ROCKS THAT THE CREATURE IS LAYING ON.

ITS HEAD LAYS HALF ON AND HALF OFF.

Noah Percy is bloodied and crying. A surge of pain makes his face a tight knot of strain. He gasps as his boyish eyes dart around in panic. He wants to scream. He can't.

A wave of pain crushes his face again and then slowly relaxes. He makes small whimpering sound. Tears fall down his cheeks. He does not make another sound. His eyes stare forever frozen in a moment of a young boy's shock.

WE SEE THE SILHOUETTED FIGURE OF IVY STANDING ON THE EDGE OF HOLE LOOKING DOWN. SHE IS LIKE A GOTHIC HOODED FIGURE against the bright sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF HOLE - DAY

Ivy listens for noises below. None comes. She backs away from the edge. She turns and shakily moves through the tangle of branches.

Her hands find the crooked branch. She feels its strength and then takes hold of it. She pulls and tugs at it until she feels it crack. She pulls down with all her weight and the thick branch snaps off.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ivy's new walking stick moves back and forth in front of her. TAP. It hits a tree, she moves around it.

The wind starts to blow hard. Leaves start to swirl around her.

THEN SHE HEARS THE FIRST WAIL FROM THE WOODS.

Her stick stops moving.

THE WAIL IS LIKE A SCREAM AND IT IS NOT HUMAN. THE FIRST WAIL IS JOINED BY ANOTHER AND THEN ANOTHER.

THE SCREAMS AND WALES COME FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. THE SOUND IS OVERWHELMING.

Ivy drops her stick and covers her ears.

WE SEE WHAT SHE CANNOT... THE TREES IN THESE WOODS HAVE HOLES THROUGH THE CENTERS OF THEM. WE WATCH AS WIND TRAVELS THROUGH THESE HOLES AND CAUSES A SOUND... A SCREAM.

IVY
(yelling)
It is for love that I am here!
I beg you, to let me pass!

Beat. THE SCREAMS CONTINUE FROM THE WOODS AS THE LEAVES KEEP SWIRLING.

Ivy's hands lower from her ears.

WE HEAR NON-HUMAN SCREAMS FROM FAR OFF IN THE WOODS.

Ivy reaches down and finds the branch she was using as a walking stick. She rises to her feet defiantly.

IVY
(crying)
It is for love-

THE SCREAMS AND WAILS SEEM TO MOVE AND SWARM AROUND HER.

She takes her first step. She is trembling but finds the strength to take a second. Her stick starts moving back and forth as her steps turn into a walk and her walk turns into a run.

CUT TO:

INT. SICK CABIN - AFTERNOON

Lucius Huni struggles hard to breathe. Alice Walker keeps a steady watch over her son.

Edward Walker steps next to her chair. He watches Lucius fighting to live.

EDWARD
(soft)

His will to live is very strong.

Alice turns in Edward's direction.

ALICE
(soft)

Love of your daughter makes
him strong.

Edward nods. He moves towards the entrance to the sick cabin. His wife Tabitha waits for him there. He opens the door and he and Tabitha exit together.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - AFTERNOON

Ivy's stick moves back and forth through high weeds. She holds her palm out and continues to check the location of the sun.

Suddenly, the weeds are gone. The stick moves back and forth unimpeded.
THERE IS A CRUNCH UNDER HER FEET.

Ivy stops. She taps her stick to the ground and **HEARS THE SMALL TICKS OF STONES.**

Ivy instantly becomes agitated and excited. She starts moving forward, her **STEPS CRUNCHING UNDERNEATH HER.** She moves until she feels her stick hitting weeds again.

She now knows the width of the GRAVEL ROAD she is on.

She turns around and counts her steps back to the center. She holds her hand up and searches for a patch of sun. She finds it. She turns and faces her body east.

Ivy is breathing heavy from excitement. She starts forward. With each step there is a CRUNCH. THE CRUNCHES START TO GET CLOSER TOGETHER AS IVY STARTS PICKING UP HER PACE.

Ivy removes the cloth bag from her shoulder. She lets it drop to the gravel and dirt as she walks.

She starts walking faster.

Ivy starts tugging at her mud caked cloak. She juggles her walking stick as she pulls the dirty cloth over her head. She slips her arms out of the tangled cloth and drops the crumpled cloak to the gravel and dirt floor.

Ivy starts running.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN – AFTERNOON

Edward Walker and Tabitha are standing in their cabin. They are holding hands. The cabin is silent. There is no one else there.

Edward gently lets go of his wife's hand and moves to the corner of the cabin. Tabitha's eyes follow her husband. She turns and walks to the front door and closes it.

We watch her put the wooden plank in place to lock it.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALL OF VINES – AFTERNOON

Ivy runs on the hidden dirt and gravel road. Her stick waves low and in front of her.

THERE IS A SUDDEN THUD AS THE STICK HITS A PACK OF FOLIAGE.

Ivy comes to a quick stop with her hands out. Both hands get swallowed into greenery.

Ivy feels around with her hands. There is A WALL OF VINES AND WEEDS IN FRONT OF HER.

Ivy moves to her side and finds the wall of foliage continues into the woods.

Ivy stops and puts down her walking stick. She reaches up and searches for something to hold. She wedges her foot into a clump of knotted weeds and pulls herself up onto the wall of green.

CUT TO:

INT. WALKER CABIN – AFTERNOON

Edward Walker turns the key of the BLACK BOX. He lifts the lid into its standing position.

Tabitha stands at his side.

Edward reaches into the darkness of the box. There is some folding clothing. His hands push aside the first layers and take hold of a heavy cloth. He pulls it out. We see its blue unfold as he raises it. Dust dances off of it and swirls in the air.

Tabitha takes a slow breath. Edward Walker stares at it with his sad childlike eyes.

WE LEAVE EDWARD AND TABITHA WALKER IN THEIR CABIN STARING AT THE PAIR OF FADED BLUE JEANS EDWARD HOLDS IN HIS HANDS.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY – AFTERNOON

WE ARE LOOKING THROUGH A TRUCK'S WINDSHIELD. WE SEE A DASHBOARD WITH A STYROFOAM CUP. WE SEE A HAND HOLDING A STEERINGWHEEL.

WE ARE MOVING ALONG A HIGHWAY lined on one side by forest. A ten-foot mesh fence covered over with vines and weeds borders the forest.

In the distance there is a SPOT OF WHITE climbing down the weed-covered fence.

WE ARE MOVING FAST. THE SPOT GETS LARGER.

THE WHITE SPOT turns into a figure dressed in white, which lands in the weeds at the side of the highway.

WE ARE MOVING ALONG SIDE IT.

THE FIGURE IN WHITE IS A GIRL. SHE STEPS OUT IN FRONT OF THE TRUCK.

THE DELIVERY TRUCK SWERVES TO AVOID HER; IT SWERVES INTO THE ONCOMING LANE AND LOSES CONTROL.

THE TRUCK ARCS IN THE ROAD; THE SCREAM OF BRAKES SHATTERS THE AIR.

The truck comes to a stop in the middle of the highway.

We hear a SNAP as the truck door opens.

THE TRUCK DRIVER gets out.

He looks frustrated and walks to the girl who stands in the middle of the highway.

TRUCK DRIVER
I didn't see you-

The striking looking girl stands with her hands at her ears.

TRUCK DRIVER
Are you hurt?

The girl slowly lowers her hands. She stares in his direction.

GIRL

What was that noise?

TRUCK DRIVER

What are you doing out here?

Beat.

GIRL

Are you from the towns?

The young truck driver looks at the white girl's old-fashioned clothing for the first time.

TRUCK DRIVER

Where did you come from?

Beat.

GIRL

The woods. You ought not tell anyone.

TRUCK DRIVER

You need help or something?

GIRL

A doctor of medicine. I need to find these things. We must hurry.

The girl holds out her hand. There is a dirty paper folded in it. The driver steps forward and takes the paper. He unfolds it. Beat.

TRUCK DRIVER

I have two or three syringes in my first aid kit. You can have them if you want.

GIRL

You have the things written on
the paper?

TRUCK DRIVER

I think so.

(beat)

Is someone sick?

The girl suddenly has tears in her eyes. Beat. She nods, "yes."

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

The same large delivery truck sits at a small country gas station by the side of the highway.

The truck driver finishes filling the tank and walks to the tiny wood shingled building that serves as the gas station.

There is a bench outside the door to the shingled building. AN OLD WOMAN AND AN OLD MAN are seated there. They are weathered and fairly unpleasant to look at. They are wearing multiple coats each. Their bodies have kind of melted into the bench from years of sitting there.

The truck driver steps up.

OLD WOMAN

Twenty-five dollars please.

TRUCK DRIVER

Twenty-five?

OLD WOMAN

Pennsylvania Gas Tax.

TRUCK DRIVER

Oh.

He pulls the cash out of his wallet and hands it over.

TRUCK DRIVER

Pardon me, but what is that
over there?

The truck driver points across the highway to the ten-foot fence covered in ivy and weeds that lines the road.

OLD WOMAN

Private property.

TRUCK DRIVER

Who lives there?

OLD WOMAN

No one. It's for animals.
Seventy-two thousand acres of
woods. No one's loud to step
foot in there. They got it fixed
so planes ain't even allowed
over it.

TRUCK DRIVER

But who lives there now?

OLD WOMAN

No one. Ain't you listening?

(beat)

Walker family owns it. But
they ain't none of them left.
The youngest son, a history
professor disappeared some
twenty-five years ago. They got
some estate watching over it
now.

Beat. The young truck driver stands thinking.

OLD MAN
Why are you all curious?

The three of them stare at each other. The truck driver looks like he's going to say something. An eternal beat.

TRUCK DRIVER
Just curious.

The young truck driver nods and heads back to his delivery truck.

The old man turns to his wife.

OLD MAN
Pennsylvania Gas Tax? – Good
one Paula.

The old woman laughs a phlegmy, hard laugh that shakes the bench.

The truck driver gets into the cab of his truck. He sees through his window the old couple laughing on the bench. He shakes his head.

TRUCK DRIVER
Crazy-fucking-white people.

HE TURNS THE IGNITION ON and pulls away from the country gas station.

WE SEE his truck on the highway as it rides along the ten-foot fence that marks the preserve. The weed-covered wall goes on for as long as the eye can see. It stretches out till it disappears into the horizon, like some painting in a children's book.

FADE TO BLACK: